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STEVENS THOMSON MASON

By Kent Sagendorph

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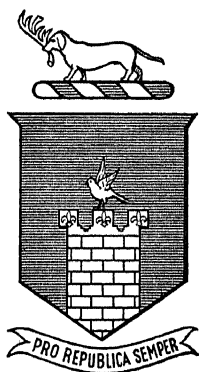
STEVENS THOMSON MASON: MISUNDERSTOOD PATRIOT

Stevens Thomson Mason

Misunderstood Patriot

By

KENT SAGENDORPH



NEW YORK

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1947

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To Ruthie

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PREFACE

STEVENS THOMSON MASON was a youth whose strong personality attracted people to him as to a magnet. In a raw, boisterous frontier atmosphere such as Detroit's undeniably was in the 1830's, Mason could not help becoming a popular hero, nor could he avoid becoming the target of political enmity. Caught between these two opposing forces, Mason lived in an environment of almost continuous drama. The selection of this remarkable character for an explanatory biography is, I think, an obvious one. Mason's life contains the ingredients for several books—fiction, political history, and the more difficult work of sympathetic but objective biography, which I have here attempted to achieve.

While Mason's position in history is not that of an Andrew Jackson nor a Henry Clay, he nevertheless exerted a powerful influence upon his times and upon posterity. Throughout Michigan, as well as in other parts of our country, there has been some speculation among historians as to the cause of Mason's eclipse in history. This volume throws some light on the subject by describing the circumstances under which Mason withdrew from public life—the most remarkable instance of its kind I have ever discovered.

After more than a century in his grave, Mason remains very much alive in the memory of the people who live in the state he created. Legends about him, like those centering around Sam Houston, Daniel Boone and Andrew Jackson himself, tend to obscure Mason's lasting achievement by perpetuating anecdotes about what he did, what he said, the cleverness with which he confounded his enemies. Legends about Mason as a character fail to do justice to him as a leader.

The task of identifying and classifying great numbers of forgotten records, letters, bound files of documents and obscure reports bearing on Mason's career has been exhausting and tedious. Fortunately I have had the help of scholars and historians who know where original source material can be found,

and who have been most generous in assisting me to crystallize the Mason legends into a substance of solid historical fact. To them, in the most sincere terms, I convey my gratitude.

Among them, the distinguished figure of Dr. George N. Fuller stands pre-eminent. Secretary of the Michigan Historical Society, head of the state's Historical Commission until his recent retirement, Dr. Fuller regarded a popular biography of Mason as a welcome addition to the documentary records about him. He plunged into this work enthusiastically and helped me with the research over a period of several years. His successor and present Secretary, Lewis Beeson, carried on Dr. Fuller's cordial cooperation by supplying me with new references. My warmest thanks go to them and to their staff at Lansing. To Mr. Sydney Bonnick, the well-known photographic technician of Detroit, who created excellent illustrations from old pictures, congratulations. Mr. Bonnick made a new photographic copy of the Mason state portrait for the frontispiece of this volume which is also used officially by the State of Michigan.

To Mr. Stevens T. Mason of California, grand-nephew of the Governor and retired attorney of Detroit, I express my thanks for locating many of Mason's family possessions and books and the long-lost portrait which he caused to be copied for this book. Mr. Haskell Nichols of Jackson, also, located and forwarded to me invaluable records of Mason and his times. Mr. W. A. Swanberg of New York, who assisted me most vitally in the preparation of this manuscript, has been my loyal friend. To them, and to all those who have voluntarily assisted in the classifying of these new discoveries of Masoniana, my most sincere gratitude.

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STEVENS THOMSON MASON

CHAPTER I

THE MASONS OF VIRGINIA

I

JOHN THOMSON MASON, ESQ., of the Virginia Masons, was a perpetual adolescent who never quite grew up.

He was boundlessly enthusiastic about new things. This in itself is an admirable quality in a pioneer, which he hoped to become. He tried hard, in the latter half of his life, to become a true pioneer, and spent weary years opening frontier forests in the Southwest. Yet he never really succeeded. Always, in his memory, there remained the knowledge that he was born a Virginia gentleman and that he had not carried on the traditions of his class. He was more of an exile than a pioneer.

In the year 1811, when he was twenty-four, this gentleman was the lord of a rolling plantation in the sunny uplands of Loudon County, as rich a wheat region as Virginia could boast. He bore a distinguished colonial name, and lived luxuriously surrounded by slaves, fine silver and resplendent coaches. He was tired of the life he lived. He was a misfit in his environment. Something in the man's character which no one could explain made him crave an escape.

He disliked his situation, but did not know exactly how to correct it. His mind was fixed on the money-making opportunities of the West, which, following the Revolution, cried out for development.

Mr. Mason carried on the routine affairs of his plantation with only half his attention. The other half was concentrated on ways to get away from Virginia. Absently he gave his confidence to men who turned out to be rogues. Casually he joined other planters in community schemes which blew up in the bankruptcy court. John Thomson Mason was a neighborhood problem in Loudon County. Socially he was one of the great

families, but culturally he might have been a backwoodsman masquerading as a Mason.

His plantation lay three miles from the border of Fairfax County, and the main road to the bright-lawned manors led past his gate. It was noted that occasionally when the great ladies of the manors rode out for the afternoon in their landaus, stiffly presentable in their curled wigs and satin gowns, they would see John T. Mason galloping madly down the dusty road in a suit of rumpled homespun, jet-black hair uncombed and standing on end, eyes gleaming with some impulsive scheme. "He was not," observed one of his relatives, dryly, "in tune with his times."

Perhaps John T. regarded that as an advantage. He was called John T. in letters merely to distinguish him from all his relatives who bore the same initial in their names but who always carefully spelled out the entire name "Thomson" (without a "p"). John T. didn't; he signed himself John T. Mason and never alluded to the Thomson part if he could help it. He was beginning to erect a barrier between himself and all the other Masons, many of whom were Thomson Masons with various given names. The family, one of Virginia's mightiest clans, seemed to him to be disintegrating rapidly. No one else apparently noticed it, and John T.'s insistence that things were going to the devil was regarded by the clan as another symptom of his growing eccentricities.

The Potomac manors of Fairfax and Loudon Counties bred a self-satisfied society which regarded any change as dangerous. It was the region described by Alexander Hamilton as the "Athens of America." Like Athens, its inhabitants saw it as the most beautiful spot in the world, surrounded almost entirely by barbarism. A few, like John T., regarded the whole pseudo-feudal structure as decadent and doomed to collapse. They told the wealthy planters that their great homes were being undermined by the economic termites of taxes and mounting overhead, only to be brushed aside impatiently and termed radicals.

John T. was one of the few Masons who could speak with

authority on the subject of economics, because he had majored in that branch at college. It was clear to him that land was still the only source of the State's wealth. He saw, furthermore, that in previous generations great grants of whole counties and river valleys had barely sufficed to maintain a single big plantation in expensive colonial "Athens of America" style. In 1811, generations later, these grants had been willed to so many cousins and grandchildren that the so-called planters were actually only farmers. Their average holdings had been cut to a point which would not support elaborate estates. But the heirs kept on building manor houses and maintaining an air of aristocracy.

The Virginia gentleman employed a steward to run his estate, confining his own energies to the only two careers open to him—statesmanship and arms. He regarded service to the State as his duty, to be performed as long as required, for no fee and at his personal expense. Whether the service took the form of writing a pamphlet, making a speech or raising a regiment of troops, he undertook it. Very few such men knew anything about bookkeeping, or the tricks of making money from the land. They tended to regard the subject as degrading.

A noteworthy exception, in 1811, was John T.'s uncle, George Mason of Gunston Hall. This huge Georgian brick mansion, set in an immense pattern of formal gardens and wide lawns, was the show place of Virginia. The estate bordered on Washington's property at Mount Vernon and in George Mason's time was equally well known. Gunston Hall had eight thousand acres under cultivation, an entire slave city with its own streets, factories and stores, its own fleet of river scows to carry its produce down the Potomac to deep-draft ships which awaited it. The estate operated five factories which produced furniture, shoes, clothing, textiles and wrought iron. There was the Gunston Hall distillery which produced Lafayette's favorite brandy, and the barracks which quartered the French warrior's personal staff during his long residence there throughout the Revolution.

Beside its docks at the river's edge, Gunston Hall's slaves had built granaries, tobacco warehouses, carding and spinning mills and a flax warehouse. In 1809, only two years previously, the estate had exported thirty-six thousand bushels of wheat to London, besides the other grain sold in domestic markets. It was the biggest estate in Virginia and George Mason the wealthiest citizen.

George Mason, the master of this enterprise, regarded himself as a planter. Yet he ran the business himself, keeping his own books in the panelled library, demanding that London buyers come to him across the Atlantic instead of maintaining a London agent.

He was one of John T.'s severest critics when the young man pointed out that the plantation system could not survive. George Mason pooh-poohed and tutt-tutted. He grew impatient. But he was the last Mason to rule Gunston Hall, and his son was forced to sell the estate after the master's death. The State of Virginia acquired most of the land and sold it to mere dirt farmers who began raising tobacco. The great house fell into ruin, and was restored in 1926 by a New Yorker who bought the property as a private residence.

John T. had the foresight to see what was wrong with Virginia, but not enough to see what was going wrong with his own life. He saw that rising taxes and mounting volumes of bills and expenses were going to ruin him, but the decision to leave Virginia was a difficult one. He was indecisive about it while events came crashing about his head in a series of crises, all seemingly aimed at chaining him even more securely to Virginia.

The statement that a wealthy Virginia gentleman, as John T. Mason obviously was regarded by his neighbors, wanted to kick over the traces and go plunging off into the wilderness makes him seem slightly ridiculous. In reality his ideas were sound, but few besides himself had the vision to realize it. John T. wanted to sell what he could, abandon what he couldn't, and leave Virginia while his holdings still had some market value.

He dreamed of migrating across the mountains to Kentucky, and of growing up with the new West.

His mother, the grand old dowager who depended heavily upon him, was ailing. His two sisters were absent for long periods, attending the elaborate balls at Washington City, as the people then called the tiny village surrounding the new Capitol. His wife was expecting a baby, her second. John T. grew restless. His family must have winked, and told each other that expectant fathers always behaved that way.

On October 20, 1811, the Mason clan arrived from all over northern Virginia in response to news announcing the imminent arrival of the baby. They assembled at the home of Mary Armistead Mason, John T.'s mother, a few miles away, because his small estate would not accommodate the mass of uncles, cousins and in-laws who responded to the call. There, in a quiet, dignified array, they waited for the tidings from John T.'s home.

The birth of Stevens Thomson Mason was an event of social importance in Virginia. This was no common baby, but an infant personage. The details of this occasion were recorded in diaries by aunts and granduncles and fifth cousins. The ceremonious act of inscribing the baby's name and birth date in the great, gold-hinged family Bible was described carefully. The baby's birth was a momentous occasion, and was stage-managed like one.

There was a time for the guests to be very quiet, and a time to make a noise. They gathered on the lawn and overflowed the veranda, silently conversing, waiting for a signal from John T.'s house beyond the horizon. The baby might die. In those harsh times he had only a fifty-fifty chance of survival at best. There might be a long moaning, shrieking ordeal; mother and infant were as likely to die as to survive, and the Mason clan might be attending a funeral, not a christening.

Presently a mounted slave came galloping down the dusty road, waving his arm. He flourished a hastily scrawled note: "A boy!"

That was the signal. Shouting and chattering, the assemblage entered its carriages and mounted its horses for the short ride to the near-by home, where John T. had a moment or two to tiptoe upstairs and meet his new son before the arrival of the family.

Ann Thomson Mason McCarty, John T.'s aunt, wrote many years later that the new father was prancing around the lawn of his little house like an Indian, with a big silver punch bowl in his arms, ladling out cupfuls to all and sundry. He pumped the arms of people who offered congratulations and seemed to be all over the place at once.

It must have been a delightful scene; the white portico of the small, yet gracious, home acting as a backdrop for spreading crinoline gowns, gentlemen in tight-fitting strap trousers, a few in the more formal knee breeches. There was formalized proposing of toasts, downed with the proper remarks and gestures; stately quadrilles, an enormous feast. The home, according to a Mason guest who wrote of it to John T.'s daughter sixty years later, was festooned with garlands of autumn leaves, and the yard was full of coaches and restless saddle horses. The letter said that John T.'s slaves were huddled under a spreading tree near the kitchen wing. They were chanting softly, taking in all the sights, and "they never tired of talking about the great day, even after it had been forgotten by the gentry."

Five days later, October 16, 1811, the Masons who lived within a day's ride returned once more, to attend the christening in the small Episcopal Church in Leesburg. They heard the solemn name pronounced slowly, with pauses:

"I christen thee Stevens — Thomson — Mason."

The baby's name had been selected long in advance. There was no doubt that he would be Stevens Thomson Mason if he were a boy. Custom decreed it, and custom was obeyed. It was the name of his famous grandfather, and must be carried on. All the Masons who wrote delicately penned but heavily-phrased accounts of this heir's appearance in the world remembered John T. with that punch bowl in his arms. Some old

ladies described the punch bowl in detail, how it had the Mason and the Thomson arms quartered, who gave it to John T., and his forgetfulness in not bringing out the matching silver candlesticks with the punch. No one remembered having seen the baby.

Custom, again, decreed that papa should take the bows, ladle out the punch and answer the toasts, while upstairs, a woman who had just passed through the shadow of death lay in her bed, sighing, with a tiny, inarticulate bundle of life beside her.

Stevens Thomson Mason was the forgotten man at his own birth.

For nineteen years, the lives of this lad and his father ran parallel. John T. shaped his son's character as a sculptor shapes clay. He took the boy everywhere, perched him on the corners of desks when he was a toddler, developed him under forced draft because he enjoyed showing him off. Then, the father, with characteristic abruptness, dropped out of the youth's life as if he had fallen overboard at sea. He seldom reappeared, and never afterward continued his influence.

But the trend he had developed in the boy's career carried on until his death. Stevens Thomson Mason had his father's alert mind, but not his father's impulsiveness or irresponsibility. Strangely, he matured before his father, becoming a rock of rugged strength to the family while John T. was still chasing luminescent bubbles far into the Southwestern forests.

Their relationship is one of the closest father-and-son combinations in American history. John T. revelled in it. He knew that he would never become an outstanding figure in the nation, but he thought he saw in his young son Stevens a spark of genius which, though it usually fizzles, sometimes flames into lasting accomplishment. If that happened, he would have something to hold up to the Masons; to force a revision of the clan's low opinion of him. John T. was a younger son, and that fact doomed him to comparative obscurity as long as he lived.

2

There stand the Masons in review, in Virginia history; lined up rank after rank in marble, bronze and State portraits, generation by generation solidifying their title—the Founding Fathers of Virginia.

Governors, Senators, Supreme Court justices, generals, law-givers and law-enforcers. The Mason name rang down the corridors of time, re-echoing for three centuries. In seven generations the family produced four major generals, five United States Senators, and three governors. For a hundred and fifty years, Masons responded to roll calls in Congress. Three ambassadors and five ministers abroad carried the Mason name in honor to the foreign capitals of the world. It resounds in historical association to this day.

There is Fort Mason in San Francisco, the port of embarkation of Pacific-bound troops, named after a Mason who was the first civil governor of California. The notorious Mason-Slidell incident which almost touched off war with England in 1861 is a memento of another. Some writers say that the Mason-Dixon Line, co-engineered by Charles Mason, is an accomplishment of the same family, although Charles himself said he was an Englishman.

At any rate, Stevens Thomson Mason (grandfather of the baby born in 1811), Armistead T. Mason and George Mason represent three generations in this immediate family who earned fame in the United States Senate. Their descendant James Murray Mason continued their prestige in the Senate until the outbreak of civil war. John Young Mason was Secretary of the Navy during the Mexican War, and Thomson Mason was Virginia's first Chief Justice.

Masons served their State and nation as long as service to the people was called statesmanship and not politics. Then they gradually thinned out of public life. The last Stevens T. Mason practiced law in Detroit for forty years without any temptation toward politics.

They were a remarkable clan. They were a hard-living,

energetic, opinionated group of scrappers, out in front during every war and first on the rostrum during every civil crisis. Few of them attained obscurity or old age, except their women-folk. They lived fast and dangerously, worn out by their excessive labors, and died young. George Mason, the "Father of Virginia" in the encyclopedias, was the eldest of the lot, and he died at 66. His brother Thomson, first Chief Justice of Virginia, died at 51. Thomson Mason's son, Stevens Thomson Mason, I, died at 43, and his son Armistead died at 39.

They are difficult people to understand today. They were too active to be remembered merely as marble busts in a museum gallery. The way they lived is too full of contrasts to be explained easily. Most Masons were rabid advocates of universal suffrage, leaders in the fight against slavery, viewers with alarm in every abuse of civil rights, outspoken in any cause aimed at levelling the class structure. They were vicious pamphleteers, loud-voiced orators. Yet they all owned slaves on their estates! they believed firmly that they were born to rule their less fortunate fellows, and that theirs was the responsibility for public well-being.

Their public careers were dedicated to establishing and preserving democracy in State and nation. They lashed out from the little mahogany speaker's stand in the House of Burgesses at Williamsburg against "established wealth; the tyranny of the privileged class" and the rest of it. When they had finished speaking, they put on their gold-banded tricorn hats, pulled down their lace cuffs, and prodded applauding citizens out of their paths with gold-headed walking sticks.

At home, they intermarried and intermingled only with their social peers. Casual strangers calling on the Masons usually found them very difficult to see. Yet their loyalty to the principles of local and State sovereignty, of popular rule, was so fanatic that the George Mason who helped frame the United States Constitution refused to sign it because it did not prohibit slavery in the new Federal Territories. He stalked out of Independence Hall in high indignation and returned to Gunston

Hall, where he held three hundred and forty-five slaves of his own. To him this attitude was not inconsistent. He wrote to John Adams:

"If this preposterous situation [slavery] is to be tolerated, the democratic form of government promised by this document is impossible. As it is presented, it will lead only to a monarchy, or to some form of tyranny by an aristocratic class wherein the rights of the common man will be crushed beyond hope of redemption."

He is the George Mason whose outcries aroused so much antagonism toward the new Constitution that he was invited to make his own suggestions about correcting it. He is credited with drafting, in reply, the first ten Amendments to the Constitution, containing the "freedoms." It is known as the "Bill of Rights," and is this particular Mason's monument in American history. The State of Virginia's monument to him is the familiar bronze statue on the State House lawn at Richmond.

He was but one of fifty or sixty Masons prominent enough to gain mention in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, which devotes thirty-four pages of fine type to their achievements. The repetition of given names makes the Mason genealogy a sort of detective assignment; my own solution to the confusion was a card index which kept them in order. Admittedly difficult to appraise in the mass, the Masons are conceded to be among America's greatest families. They were leaders from the days of the first American progenitor, whose name, just to make things more confusing for the researcher, was George Mason.

Colonel George Mason was a cavalry captain in the army of Charles II of England in the war against Cromwell. Defeated in the Battle of Worcester in 1651, Colonel Mason helped smuggle Bonnie Prince Charlie across the Channel to France two jumps ahead of Cromwell's Roundheads. Then he secreted himself and a few loyal companions aboard a packet bound for Jamestown. When he arrived, in the same

year (1651), he found himself in a decayed, half-starved outpost which was on the point of collapse.

Colonel Mason laid out and named Stafford County, Virginia, after his old home in Staffordshire. He assumed leadership of the colony; he was the first sheriff, a justice, and commander of the militia. His son and grandson held the *same three posts in the same county*, for the ensuing century. By that time the family was well-established as a sort of hereditary autocracy, coupled with the largest fortune in Virginia.

The head of each generation of Masons in this line of descent was always named George, so the genealogist scratches his head over George Mason, I, II, III and IV, doing the same things at the same place but at distressingly different times. These leaders, named George Mason, begat more than one son, and following British precedent, willed the bulk of their estates to the eldest, but a certain patrimony to each younger son. In tracing five generations of the family we find that three of them built new manors and started new lines of descent. They married into the other great Virginia families, the Carters, the Thomsons, the McCartys and the Lees.

Thus while George Mason, I, bequeathed George Mason, II, a tract of land equal to three modern Virginia counties, George Mason, III, held some forty-five square miles of land and his son George Mason, IV, suffered along with only twenty-three thousand acres. Of this, a great proportion was useless foothill and swamp and the rest, except eight thousand acres, was forest. He could have cultivated more if he had had more labor, but with that acreage under cultivation he was very wealthy.

George Mason, IV (1725-1792), was born in Stafford County, but as a young man migrated to the Potomac River onto land bequeathed him by his father and began developing this big plantation. His father had begun the construction of Gunston Hall there, in Fairfax County, adjoining the Washington estate at Mount Vernon. George Mason, IV, and George Washington were intimate boyhood friends and close

collaborators throughout the whole period of colonial friction with England and the Revolution.

In turn, his younger brother Thomson Mason, under their father's will, had inherited two thousand acres of beautiful rolling wheat land in what is now called Loudon County, up-river from Gunston Hall. This he left intact to his only son, Stevens Thomson Mason. This brilliant young man was a colonel in the Continental Army at the age of twenty-four, Washington's aide throughout the war, and one of the first United States Senators to hold office upon the adoption of the Constitution. After twelve years of outstanding achievement in the Senate he died suddenly in 1803, at the age of 43.

The unbending custom of favoring the elder son is noticeable in the Senator's will. The elder son, Armistead Thomson Mason, was a fat, somewhat pompous youth who had broken away from family tradition only once when he disdained matriculation at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, to attend a Northern university. He inherited Thomson Mason's lovely Georgian manor house, "Raspberry Plain," and one thousand acres. The other thousand acres were left to his younger son, who was John T. Mason.

In 1803, when the will was probated, John T. was sixteen and about ready to enter college. He had been carefully tutored during childhood at "Raspberry Plain" and showed the chief advantage of the tutor system, which lay in its ability to prepare students for college at an earlier age than do the schools of today. Virginia had no public schools, and very few private schools of an elementary or preparatory nature. Families of any standing employed tutors, who either discovered some latent ability in their pupils and hastened to develop it, or gave up in disgust before college age was reached.

Thomson Mason's will bequeathed to John T., in lieu of the family homestead, a fund wherewith to build one of his own. He selected a site five miles from the town of Leesburg, employed an architect, and departed for the College of William and Mary as the first of the fourth-generation Masons on its rolls.

He developed rapidly and, as many undergraduates do, became a bit conceited. His preparatory education, apparently, had been excellent. He had a nimble mind, quick to absorb facts and forget them again after examinations. John T.'s extra time allowed him to take up outside interests, notably a sort of gloomy preoccupation with what was happening to Virginia and what was to become of him. He delved into all the information available on the science of economics, which wasn't much.

John T.'s major talent obviously lay in that field. Although economics was disguised under the clumsy title of "ethical philosophy" at William and Mary, the youth was absorbed in it to the exclusion of his attention to other subjects.

He pored over old titles and land records; he saw quickly that with every will probated, new heirs dividing once-ample land grants, land was shrinking from generation to generation at an alarming speed. His one thousand acres, for example. In his great-grandfather's time there had been twenty-three thousand acres to bequeath to a son. His future children—what would he leave to them? A kitchen garden?

He debated with faculty members on these themes. Professors at William and Mary, as well as at other old colonial colleges, were considerably more scholarly and less tolerant than their modern counterparts at the great universities of the twentieth century. Many of them were ordained ministers, often Catholic priests. They accepted their classroom function as part of their divine mission, the more so since all these colleges were originally chartered as theological seminaries and began teaching, not economists, but ministers and clergymen. Such serious men did not like to have their most cherished concepts flouted and attacked by a cocky undergraduate. One professor undertook to straighten out John T. on some topics. He began inviting him to his home.

This scholar, Professor William Moir, was a doctor of philosophy as well as an Episcopalian divine. Professor Moir taught a few courses in "ethical philosophy," but from the Mason family's letters about him he appears to have been

intensely practical and to have regarded the subject as a science. He was an undersized, heavily bearded man in middle life, irritable with his students but quiet and patient at home. He had taken his philosophy degree at the University of Edinburgh, and boasted of his family's descent from the Scottish poet David Macbeth Moir. But his family had lived in Virginia for three generations.

At the professor's house, John T. met a girl. She was the professor's daughter, Elizabeth. John T. forgot the beauties of abstract discussion about ethical philosophy, and began paying court to her. She was a dainty little thing, fragile as a Dresden doll. Often she was ill, and fainted easily. She had none of her father's love of argument.

Elizabeth was classic simplicity: finely cast features, brown hair primly combed in two slanted planes over her forehead from a central part, and large blue eyes. As became a young girl of the period, she spoke not. Her family never recorded any sayings of Elizabeth's. She moved silently, a willowy figure in a high-waisted Empire gown, and was demure.

Apparently John T. loved that shy sweetness and Elizabeth's silence. She was eighteen when he first met her; twenty at the time of their marriage in 1809. He was twenty-two. Their marriage again illustrates the indifference shown by John T. toward tradition, and what the family thought. He was the first Mason to marry into a family distinguished only for scholarship, and without property. It set a precedent carefully avoided by the Masons in the future. Shortly after their marriage, when John T. had christened his new home "Moirfield" and was happy as only a well-to-do bridegroom can be, Professor Moir and Elizabeth's tiny, brittle mother packed up, left Williamsburg and moved in with their daughter and son-in-law. John T. supported them for the rest of their lives.

Apparently John T. expected to live at "Moirfield" and raise his family there. Soon after the arrival of the Moirs, however, John T. began exhibiting acute symptoms of uneasiness, absent-mindedness and dissatisfaction with his environment. It may have been the Moirs, but it is more probable

that following the honeymoon and a resumption of his normal pessimism about Virginia's future, John T. realized that "Moirfield"'s thousand acres would never support a big establishment in comfort. We know that he came to dislike "Moirfield" quickly and found excuses to stay away from home.

He spent long hours in Leesburg, moodily watching long wagon trains of migrating farmers plodding along toward the western mountain pass, and toward Kentucky. The West became a fever in his brain. He couldn't go.

At home he was surrounded with annoyances. A huge, coal-black negress had come to "Moirfield" with the Moirs as Elizabeth's attendant; her name was simply Granny Peg. She spoke only a few words of English and was entirely pagan, never becoming a convert to Christianity. When Elizabeth was four or five years old, Professor Moir had encountered a slave auction in progress on the Jamestown docks. This buxom negress, captured in a Guinea village only a few weeks before, was being pushed about the scene, cruelly lashed by the auctioneer's whip, without being able to understand what was going on. More as an act of compassion than anything else, the professor bought her and brought her home as Elizabeth's servant. As the girl grew, Granny Peg lavished affection upon her. The slave's whole life was Elizabeth. When Elizabeth married, Granny Peg concluded that she would have to bring up Elizabeth's husband, too.

She coldly disapproved of John T. and of everything he did. The lord of the manor did not live up to the slave's idea of a fit consort for her adored Elizabeth. She seemed to be hovering around him constantly, eyeing him, muttering to herself. Inconsequential, perhaps, but another source of irritation added to the growing list of domestic troubles.

Soon after the birth of his son Stevens in 1811, John T. decided to move into Leesburg and practice law. Admission to the bar was not difficult. Requirements were not much greater than those for a notary public's appointment in our day. If a man could read and write well, if he knew who Blackstone was and could quote from his *Commentaries*, if he knew the differ-

ence between a criminal and a civil action and had an attorney friend to sponsor him, he was speedily admitted.

Many Masons were lawyers; few practiced law as a profession. John T.'s grandfather, Thomson Mason, was a career lawyer who studied his Blackstone in the same courts where Blackstone gathered his material—London's historic Courts of the Middle Temple. He was admitted to the bar there, first as a barrister, finally as a solicitor. He was a successful London attorney for some years before returning to Virginia immediately prior to the Revolution. John T. never had that kind of training, but didn't need it to practice law in Leesburg. He had a degree from William and Mary, and that was enough. So he bought volumes for a law library, some office furniture, and hung out his shingle.

Surprisingly, he was a success. He could argue as long as a judge would listen. He was a genuine Virginia Mason, which flattered his rural clients who came to him with boundary disputes, leases, wills and the usual docket of a small-town lawyer. His practice flourished and at night John T. took his books home and studied hard. Opportunity was coming. Someday it would appear. He would be ready.

3

John T. was the most ingenious of the seventh-generation Masons of Virginia. He delighted in experiment, mainly out of adolescent curiosity, but to some extent as a means of eventually freeing himself from the rut of his environment. The other Masons watched the show with interest, wondering how long he would continue to fight.

At Leesburg he adopted little mannerisms, changed his costume and his personality. Gone was the formal ruffled neck-stock he had worn at "Raspberry Plain", and in its place came a plain black satin neckband, around a high starched collar. He wore trousers of Leesburg homespun, and let his black hair grow upstanding and wild.

Anecdotes surrounded him. He cultivated them; such things brought him clients. His village prestige presently brought him to the notice of James Monroe, the Leesburg patriarch, whose spreading estate adjoined "Moirfield" but who seldom was seen in the town on business and never socially. Mr. Monroe was Secretary of State, at the time, in the cabinet of President Madison. He had served as United States Senator from Virginia just before John T.'s brother Armistead held the seat, and had succeeded John T.'s father, Stevens Thomson Mason, I.

There had been a warm, intimate social contact between the families for many years, Masons and Monroes visiting and dining with each other. Mr. Monroe seemed like an old man to John T., when during the summer of 1812 the great man came home to his big, cool house for a rest. One of his first social invitations was received in great glee by John T. It was the first of many such visits throughout the summer.

John T., in his own words, was "astonished at the progressive ideas I received from Mr. Monroe." The Secretary viewed the problems of the nation with a broad perspective the younger man had not attained. He sat in the sun outside his pillared manor house, gazing absently at the distant Potomac, while his mind roamed the horizons of the world. He talked of the recent Burr Conspiracy, and its implications.

Monroe had a feeling, based on this near disaster, that the chief danger to the country's future lay in the West. In time, the armed forces of the infant Republic could protect its shores. But there was a limitless "back yard", an unknown wilderness spanning the continent. Maps meant little. Those grand claims which appeared as parallel lines stretching from existing states westward to nowhere—ridiculous!

Authorities at Washington City didn't know who was in possession. No one knew what foreign agents were stirring up trouble. Other nations still clung to precarious technical claims to part of that "backyard." It was a vast question mark; a fertile breeding ground for plots and schemes of revolutions.

The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 was merely a step toward the eventual colonizing of that inland empire. There were Texas, Florida, the Great Lakes—

When John T. heard words like these; he brooded over them for days. His law office looked like a prison cell. The West! That was where he wanted to be—out there winning the West for the United States! But there was the family; his wife, his little girl, Mary, now aged two and a half, beginning to toddle about and ask questions. And the baby.

Ah, yes, the baby!

Stevens Thomson Mason, II, a squalling little object only a few months old, a fuzz of black hair on his pink head and two blue eyes as big as his mother's—what was to be done about him? And about little Mary? Suppose he found an opportunity to migrate westward. Mary might stand such a trip; the baby surely couldn't.

John T. silently wished that his son would grow up fast.

The year 1812, in spite of its mounting war hysteria, was an unhappy one for him, until autumn. His mind full of his own worries, John T. was slow to perceive something that most Masons knew before him. Romance had come to "Raspberry Plain", his mother's house.

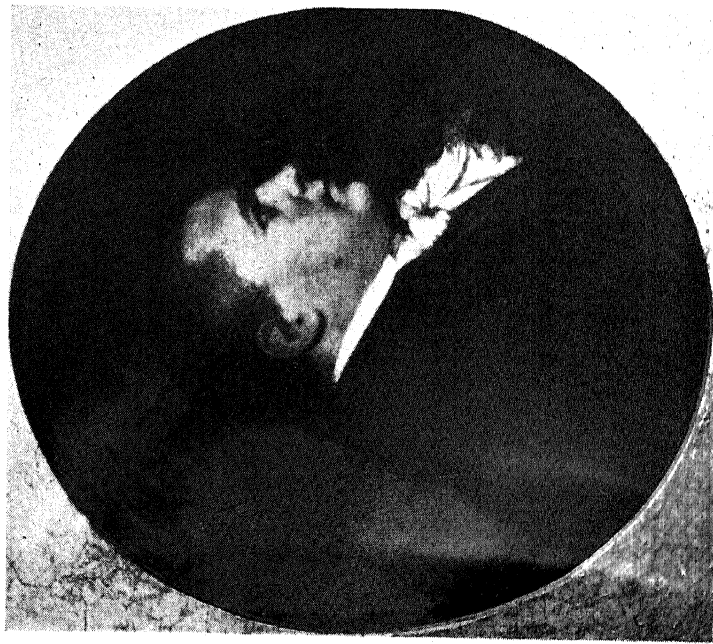
John T.'s two sisters, Mary and Catherine, were Potomac belles who were well past the first blush of girlhood as marriageable age was reckoned then, but charming in a slim, patrician way. Mary, the younger, was twenty-one; her sister Catherine, twenty-six. "Raspberry Plain", only forty miles from the white-domed Capitol, was close enough to enable the girls to move in official Washington society during the season, and there they had met two eligible bachelors, both Congressmen.

These girls had been trained at home to be ladies. Their aunt, Ann Thomson Mason McCarty, reading Plato to her sons at Gunston Hall; Mary Armistead Mason, their mother, debating philosophy with Madison and Monroe at "Raspberry Plain", failed to endow Mary and Catherine with a reverence for scholarship. They wanted homes, not degrees.



THE STATE PORTRAIT OF GOVERNOR MASON. Painted by Alvin Smith in 1837, when Mason was 26 years old and campaigning for re-election as Governor for his second term. The portrait, six feet by fifteen feet, hangs in the House chambers at the Michigan State capitol, Lansing.

Photograph by Sydney Bonnick.



STEVENS T. MASON OF RASPBERRY PLAIN, VIRGINIA, grandfather of Governor
Mason, and his wife, MARY ARMISTEAD MASON. From crayon miniatures by
James Sharpless, about 1795.

For some years they had been cautiously, demurely looking over the field while curtsying at Washington minuets. The clapboard town was a disgrace to the nation, there wasn't a decent inn in the place, and every Congressman and official who could secure an invitation spent his leisure time in the Potomac manors. "Raspberry Plain" had been full of them, on week ends, for many years. Sometimes the manor resembled a Washington boardinghouse on such occasions, with Congressmen loudly caucussing on the veranda while cabinet officials debated with dignity in the drawing room.

Then there were lonely weeks while the girls were visiting Mrs. Monroe or some other Virginia family at their Washington homes. Because they were almost like Secretary Monroe's own daughters, they were invited everywhere and embraced the opportunity to make careful selections. Gradually they centered their attentions upon Benjamin Howard and William T. Barry, both serving their first terms in Congress and representing the same state—Kentucky.

John T. began cultivating these two gentlemen. Mr. Howard fitted into manor society with practiced ease, but Barry, a year or two older, spent an exasperating amount of time in pure man-talk with frontiersmen and seemed shy in the presence of the Mason girls.

He singled out Catherine Mason for what attentions he could muster, and she encouraged him. They were married rather abruptly during the summer of 1812, with her mother's benign approval. Ordinarily an affair like this would have dragged on decorously for years, but war was in the air and Barry might have to go. No sooner had the wedding been celebrated than the younger Mason sister, Mary, came to her mother and announced that Ben Howard had proposed and that she had accepted.

Mrs. Mary Armistead Mason viewed that romance with deep disapproval. She liked Ben Howard very much, and he was socially acceptable. But Mary was her "baby", only twenty-one. Her departure would sadden "Raspberry Plain"; leave the old dowager with only her eldest son, then in the United

States Senate, to come home for occasional week ends. She sobbed. Then, as mothers must, she gave her consent.

The two couples began packing for an immediate return to Kentucky. The star of opportunity burst before John T.'s eyes. The transportation problem was going to be difficult. The two couples had only themselves and baggage. They had no slaves, no wagons, no provisions, and the trail through the mountains was long and tortuous. John T. had slaves; he had money, and facilities for equipping the party as a regular expedition. He volunteered. The two Kentuckians accepted. At this, Mary Armistead Mason wept until her health seemed to fail her.

"Kentucky?" she wailed. "That place? Indians behind every tree?" Why, even Daniel Boone had to hide from them. John T.'s father, Stevens, had headed a government exploration party through the Cumberland Gap in 1801 and his vivid description of its hazards was preserved in his diary at "Raspberry Plain". John T. read excerpts from it:

"The pilgrim into those regions," Stevens Thomson Mason had written, "will have to pass through the country of the Cherokee Indian, nearly one hundred miles over the Cumberland mountains, where he will be exposed to every unclemency of the weather without a shelter to retire to, for there is not a house or hut in the entire journey; a journey in which all travellers are obliged at all times and of unavoidable necessity to sleep one night at least, and from the fall of rains and the rise of watercourses often many nights, without a roof to cover them from the beating of the storm, and moreover where they are liable at every stop to be robbed by the Indians, as I myself experienced while passing through that wilderness."*

Stevens had left an excellent map of the course he had followed. That, said John T., was the route they'd take. Mr. Barry demurred with violence. Why, he said, that was silly. The new wagon road passing through Leesburg continued on to Redstone Fort, Pennsylvania, to Pittsburgh, and thence down the national road which lay parallel to the Ohio River

*Also quoted in *Travel in America*, by Seymour Dunbar, p. 158.

to Covington, Kentucky, from which Lexington was just a day's travel by a wagon road. It could be done in two weeks, easily. John T. ran his finger along his father's inked topographical map. He pointed out that the route Barry preferred was not only longer, but that it crossed the mountains at an elevation of seven thousand feet; the map said so. Now, Boone's old Cumberland Gap trail was much easier, sparing the women and the tiny baby, Stevens Thomson Mason II, the anguish of that mountain climb between western Virginia and Pittsburgh.

"It's not seven thousand feet high in those passes," Barry replied.

But he apparently was outvoted; the southern route was selected and preparations for departure began. John T. procured stores, supplies and equipment. Whether he sold "Moir-field" or not we don't know; he closed it, packed up his Leesburg lawbooks and desk, and ordered all his furniture piled on long, wide-wheeled wagons.

Somewhere John T. bought an old six-horse coach, probably a stagecoach. Into this sturdily built vehicle he packed four women and two children: Mary Mason Howard, Catherine Mason Barry, Elizabeth Moir Mason and her aging mother. John T.'s two children were held on their laps. He packed a veritable wagon train; a line of heavy road wagons piled high with food and equipment. While he was thus engaged, war was declared with England and the President sent commands to all reservists to join the colors. Both Ben Howard and William T. Barry received these summons, urging them to return to Kentucky with all haste.

Almost immediately came another letter, for Howard. The President had carved out the upper half of the gigantic Louisiana area under the name of the Territory of Missouri, and had appointed Colonel Benjamin Howard military governor. He would have to stop in Lexington just long enough to leave his bride, and hurry on. It made a quick departure imperative.

In the Northwest, Tecumseh's council fires were blazing, and British officers fed the flames. Already British men-of-war

lay off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. Like the roll of approaching drums, the terror of war rolled louder and nearer, seeming to drown out everything else.

Brass-bound trunks were lashed to the top of the coach. Behind, stretching far into the distance, came the wagon train. Twenty slaves drove the teams or perched precariously on the canvas-draped loads. Granny Peg was there, so was old Peff, a slave John T. had inherited from his father, his personal servant since boyhood. Handling the intricate lines of the six-horse coach team was John T.'s coachman, a slave named John Jackson, who had driven Senator Mason to White House receptions and had been bequeathed to John T. in the estate.

In the wagons there lay, carefully wrapped, a gleaming set of English silver with the Mason and Thomson arms, the ceremonial punch bowl and candelabra, John T.'s law library, some of his father's old books and Professor Moir's heavy scholastic library. In those wagons were books like Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, with John T.'s college notations in the margins; Mackintosh's *Review of the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*; a finely bound calfskin edition of William Penn's *History of the People Called Quakers*; Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*; and Voltaire's *Candide*; and many hundred other books. Under the canvas tarpaulin was a heavy English walnut dining table, chairs, a carved sideboard, chests, beds, foot warmers, brass andirons, trunks tied with rope and heavy with crinoline gowns, Paisley shawls, lace caps, fluffy hooded cloaks, absurd corsets.

All these items were entered on John T.'s inventory. Many are in museums now in Michigan and Virginia: shoes, cooking pots, fire tongs, pewter tankards, mixing bowls.

Looking at a relief map we can see that Barry was right and John T. was cruelly wrong about the proposed route to Kentucky. Modern maps are more accurate than those he had; nevertheless Barry had ridden to Washington from Lexington after his election to Congress and his services as guide ought to have been more important than John T.'s father's map. But John T. would listen to no disparaging remarks

about his father's handiwork. Stevens Thomson Mason, I, was no engineer, and his estimates of altitudes and distances were woefully incorrect, but John T. would have no other.

Mounting his horse, he rode to the head of the column. Barry, Colonel Ben Howard and Professor Moir rode alongside the coach. In early September, 1812, the pilgrimage began. John T. raised his arm, Jackson on his box cracked his long whip over the coach teams, and the procession wound slowly out of the "Raspberry Plain" driveway.

The road selected, through Cumberland Gap and along the old Boone Trail, was one of the first means by which white men invaded the plains of Tennessee and Kentucky through the mountain barrier. Boone himself had publicized it quite widely after some semi-factual adventures around the Cumberland Gap nearly twenty years previously. After him came Senator Mason, heading a military survey party whose objective was opening a practical means of communication between the interior and the seaboard.

Boone was a pioneer; the very name of Dan'l Boone is part of our folklore. Not so well known is the fact that he was also a good promoter and organizer; his influence is strong in Kentucky today. He did not like the Boone Trail and said so many times. He negotiated it on horseback with an Indian guide, discovering the practical value of the Gap. But he forded rivers, galloped around the shoulders of forbidding mountains and got through, never expecting that his discovery route would be followed by a supply train of John T.'s household goods.

North of the Gap the mountains were impassable. Through it, one had to ford the Cumberland River, which John T.'s caravan could not do. And Senator Mason had forgotten to enter this important bit of information on the map that John T. trusted so implicitly.

In 1812 the route to the Gap from Leesburg lay south, through Richmond. There it turned southwest and began the approach to the mountains over a well-travelled emigrant road which continued on for some two hundred miles until it

crossed the "Great Road" from the Yadkin River to Philadelphia, four hundred and thirty-five miles long. Intersecting this main highway, the emigrant trail vanished entirely within the next hundred miles. From a point near the present town of Pulaski, Virginia, there was only a vague set of directions on the map leading to a ruined Revolutionary War blockhouse called Fort Chissel, two hundred miles east of Cumberland Gap. This was Daniel Boone's famous "Wilderness Road" which in the first three decades of the eighteenth century saw thousands of emigrant trains arrive at Fort Chissel annually, thence branching off either to Tennessee, or across the Blue Ridge Mountains to Kentucky.

In 1812 it was easily followed as far as the old blockhouse, but not surveyed. Arriving there, the Mason party studied its map again. Daniel Boone had indicated directions from Fort Chissel to Cumberland Gap as about two hundred miles. From the Gap, the route progressed along the top of a ridge of mountains, through another gap, up again and across the hardest section of the terrain, the crossing of the Smoky Mountains.

Once across, the route, which Boone had ridden in 1775 at the request of a land company interested in opening new routes to Kentucky, led northward through a valley called "Boone's Trace". This route branched off on other routes which Boone had dubbed "The Warrior's Path" and "Bison Street."

By following haphazard directions hastily scribbled by Boone in his letters to the Transylvania Land Company, more than thirty thousand white men had arrived safely in Kentucky along Boone's road by the year 1800. Some authorities, notably Seymour Dunbar, cite figures to show that hundreds of caravans like John T.'s came safely across the mountains every year. In that case there seems to be no obvious excuse why, under John T.'s leadership, the journey to Lexington should have required seven weeks, as he admitted in later years. It was hideous.

Trees had to be felled to pry the mud-caked coach out of

the mire. Teamsters shouted profanely at horses, while the ladies covered their ears. From Fort Chissel to Cumberland Gap the party averaged only a few miles a day. "We were frequently in danger of being killed by the falling of horses on the icy and almost impassable trace, frozen at night, and above all, attacked by hostile Indians who were even at that time making war upon the whites at many places on the frontier. We subsisted on scanty allowances of stale bread and meat. The ladies rode with children in their laps, the men with guns on their shoulders."

He probably got lost after arriving at Cumberland Gap, since the remainder of his own account of the trip was removed from his file of letters by John T. himself in later life. Elizabeth Moir Mason was ailing, but held the baby, Stevens Thomson Mason, II, in her arms throughout the harrowing journey. There was no place to leave him except in some other pair of arms, and that wasn't practical.

Mary Mason Howard, thin and haggard, was ill. While great flakes of mud fell from the coach wheels, she became weaker. There was nothing to do but go on. No help for her could be found in those mountains. Mile after mile they gnawed their way toward the summits of the Blue Ridge, only to find more summits, higher, confronting them farther on. Fall turned to early winter. There came blizzards to whip them on. It was an experience that left its mark on the minds and bodies of everyone in the caravan, black as well as white.

After seven weeks, weary in every bone, most of the party sick and Mary Mason Howard critically ill, the caravan limped into Lexington. It was November, 1812, and Lexington itself was in the grip of fever.

CHAPTER II

FRESH GRAVES IN KENTUCKY

I

STEVENS THOMSON MASON's earliest childhood memories were scenes of mourning at funerals.

Kentucky, as a state, was in mourning. Everywhere, when the boy was about four years old, he heard tales of the savages who had ambushed and slain nearly two thousand brave Kentucky fighting men at the hideous River Raisin massacre near Monroe, Michigan, in midwinter, 1813. He saw the pitiful remnants of the decimated troops, mutilated and stumbling, dribbling back in scores and dozens for the next two or three years. He and his family stood silently on the sidewalks of Lexington to watch the slow processions pass.

It was drilled into his eager mind that somehow Michigan had cost all those lives. Michigan was a savage wilderness where no man's life was safe. It was a distant land many days' journey to the north, where the country's flag had been disgraced by a man named General Hull, and where many battles had been fought. Memories like these are enough to fix a name like Michigan in a boy's mind as a very exciting place.

His mother, particularly, shuddered at the Territory's name. His father looked grim and shook his head.

The impact of the disaster of Michigan on the boy's nimble mind was a lasting one. More than any other factor, it lassoed and hog-tied his galloping imagination and branded it with one word—politics. He heard about Michigan day after day: why the cowardly Hull had surrendered; what was wrong with the War Department to make such a thing possible; how Kentucky troops had been sacrificed on the altar of bureaucratic indifference; the crying need for men in office who would do something.

He heard little else. Around the house, John T. was constantly making extemporaneous speeches about these things, and Stevens T., aged four or five, was the only one who would listen.

In 1815, John T. was rich. He bought a famous old Southern mansion with three hundred acres of velvety blue-grass lawns; he rode in a varnished coach with liveried footmen and he was a big name in Lexington. The boy Stevens only knew what he saw. He didn't remember the small rented house the family had occupied upon arrival in Lexington. His parents didn't like to recall the galling memories of that place, and very little was said about it.

Local records in Lexington have very little to say about John T. Mason's arrival in December, 1812. The attention of the State was centered on meeting its quota of five thousand troops for the fight against the British on the lakes. The Mason caravan came snaking down out of the hills and limped into Lexington just in time to be caught in this recruiting furor. There was no time to talk about anything else.

Kentucky went far beyond its quota with nine thousand able-bodied men raised and equipped within three months. The enthusiasm for the war mounted almost to hysteria. Kentuckians, mostly quick aggressive woodsmen and congenital scrappers, rose en masse. They were fighting against something that seemed very real to them. The *Lexington Gazette*, four wavery columns of blurred woodcut type, defined the war as an attempt by the British to curb our budding national spirit. People said that the haughty British officers in their gold braid and lace cuffs were openly contemptuous of the whole idea of American independence. They boasted that they would squelch it by a few bold moves. Everybody knew that the plan included four simultaneous moves. British fleets were to sail audaciously up Chesapeake Bay, the Mississippi and Hudson Rivers and swarm down from Canada upon the Great Lakes. They planned the very move James Monroe had visioned in talks with John T.—quick cleanups with Indian help in the West and on the Lakes, and a sweeping movement eastward to meet

the victorious fleets. The Americans would be caught in a vise.

A British officer wounded in the battle of Tippecanoe told grizzled William Henry Harrison that the British had complete plans for the administration of the United States as a crown colony, and that they did not anticipate any difficulty brushing aside American armed defense. Whether it was true or just a contemptuous bit of propaganda, it aroused such hatred in Kentucky that everybody who could walk and carry a rifle volunteered.

In New England, a budding revolt had rumbled against the Federal embargo which had tied up Yankee shipping and kept seamen ashore rather than let them face the danger of being seized and thrown into servitude on British men-of-war. Privateers were armed and manned. In New York State there was difficulty raising troops. In the East the war was looked upon as a cruel act of fate; something that had to be suffered through and survived if possible. In the West, Kentuckians grabbed their rifles and swarmed northward to kill the British; just like that.

Kentucky sent them away without food and with one blanket for six men, but they got there and they fought. In spite of the ambush and massacre at the Raisin, they rallied and rushed on. They chased the British commander, General Proctor, across the Detroit River and far into Canada. At the Thames River, near the present city of London, Ontario, they caught him. They killed the wily Tecumseh. They came so close to killing many British officers that four of them ran madly through the woods for eight miles, half-dressed, leaving their subordinates and all their Indians at the mercy of the Kentuckians. It was a bloody slaughter; as bad as the Raisin massacre. But it turned the tide of the war. Kentuckians supported Commodore Perry and helped him sweep the British from the Lakes, and they were the last troops to return to their homes.

The British began paying the Indians a cash bounty for American scalps. One Indian survivor, in 1824, related that four tribes of redskins were making money on that bounty as long as Tecumseh was alive. After the Battle of the Thames,

he said, at the mere sight of a Kentuckian they'd vanish, and go hunting somewhere else.

This sort of thing showed British military policy at its worst. Kentuckians, on the other hand, were fighting a back-to-the-wall defense of their very homes and not even a scalping Indian could stand up before that. Lexington, from the very day the disaster at the Raisin was known, was like a military headquarters. John T. Mason could not have picked a worse time to arrive.

His sister Mary, utterly spent by the tortuous seven weeks, was very sick. His wife Elizabeth was expecting another baby. The men upon whom he had counted for introductions into the right Lexington circles vanished into the excitement of the war as soon as they arrived in town. Governor Ben Howard resigned his post as Territorial Governor and was appointed Brigadier-General of the Kentucky Volunteers. William T. Barry wanted action; he was given a commission as a major and became one of the great personal heroes of the war.

General Howard couldn't go to war. His bride was uncomfortably ill at first, then seriously ill. She survived the jolting of that coach only eight months, and died quietly in July, 1813. Ben Howard never wore his resplendent general's uniform. He followed her to the grave three months later, dying in that quick, mysterious way in which so many people died a century ago. There was no explanation.

It was an omen, a sign of more tragic events to come. Elizabeth Moir Mason was delivered of a male child in the rented house in Lexington. It was born dead. The following year, 1814, she bore her anguished husband another son. The babe lived about an hour.

With returning troops in 1815; with General Andrew Jackson's glorious but belated victory over the British at New Orleans and with the coming of peace to Lexington, the skies cleared. The war had wiped out many of the town's old associations. New beginnings were made. John T. Mason had a degree from the College of William and Mary; he had a big law library and he knew more law than half of these back-

woods lawyers ever knew existed. After the war, his practice became very large.

Socially, he and Elizabeth Moir Mason captivated Lexington. Major Barry returned, wearing the laurels of a hero. He was John T.'s brother-in-law, and that helped. Henry Clay the mighty, a sort of haloed demigod around Kentucky, singled John T. out for the benediction of personal and professional approval. John T., as one of his colleagues said later, was a "made man."

Henry Clay, next to the aging Daniel Boone himself, was Kentucky's greatest man. Clay lived simply but comfortably at a gracious little blue-grass estate he called "Ashland", three miles from the town. He had been in Congress long enough to acquire a large national repute. It had the effect upon his fellow citizens of endowing Henry Clay with an aura of greatness which made everything he did seem like the inspired act of a statesman. He maintained a law office, but he wasn't there to practice very often. When he appeared, strangers bowed to him on the street. In 1815 he was at the peak of his Kentucky popularity.

A small, benign man with mild gaze and quiet voice, he wore his thinning hair very long on each side so that it completely covered his ears and draped almost to his stiff, stand-up collar. He looked and acted like a distinguished man. Little favors from him were magnified into events of great importance; stories were handed down from father to son. Withal, he was a cantankerous old crab who took a serene joy in making his enemies miserable. It was he who suggested to John T. that there was a fine old estate for sale, adjoining his own.

Clay was executor for the Todd estate, owners of the property, but John T. didn't know that until later. The home was a great, imposing three-story brick mansion, built by Colonel Levi Todd in 1790 and said to be the first brick house west of the Alleghenies. Because of its associations with Todd, the real colonizer of Kentucky, it was the center of most of Kentucky's early history and already a hallowed object of

respect. Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd, came from that family.

John T., instead of preserving the historical associations of the estate, changed its name and its appearance. He painted the whole house a dazzling white, planted a formal flower garden and built new slave quarters. He christened it "Serenity Hall", because his maternal grandfather Robert Armistead had thus named his palatial manor in Louisa County, Virginia. John T. opened a new carriage drive to the Boonesborough Road which ran past the property, planted trees and built fences.

He could afford it. There was a surplus in the bank and more came in every day. John T.'s dream of a future in Kentucky had come true. He was the happiest man in the world, and one of the luckiest.

Late in 1815, John T. began worrying. Another baby was expected. Every possible consideration was shown the fragile little Elizabeth. Perhaps after three years the effect of that bone-jarring journey across the mountains would have disappeared. There was no recorded celebration, no social event. But there was medical skill, and quiet, and a sense of security. The baby was born; a girl. They had her christened Emily Virginia, and she lived to be 97.

Stevens Thomson Mason was nearly four at the time.

He was an eager, bright-eyed, effervescent child, abnormally curious. Tall, but slender as a willow reed and nearly as delicate, his big blue eyes made him appear to be eternally questioning, questioning, trying to puzzle out the answer to the riddle of the world. When he was a small boy his face was deliciously heart-shaped, smooth, dainty. He had the wavy chocolate-brown hair of the Moirs, but he had his father's energy. Even though he was a beautiful child in an age when rich boys were dressed in elaborately adorned costumes, he doesn't appear to have been a sissy. One reason, of course, was John T. Anybody who could keep up with that dynamic man needed energy.

Stevens learned so fast that sometimes he scared John T. He couldn't read out of books, but he could listen. When he

was five he knew why General Jackson was a hero. People had explained the Battle of New Orleans in detail for him, drawn diagrams, quoted statistics. His astonishing brain quickly analyzed all this, filed it away under the proper headings for future reference. Professor Moir, humble at times in the presence of this marvellous intellect, and constantly developing it, began a new career. Its object was the transformation of this bright-eyed little boy into one of the few recorded child prodigies of the time.

Not a hundred miles away there was a boy about two years older running barefooted around the tall grass of a tiny backwoods cabin. Nobody in the world of affairs knew that he, Abe Lincoln, was there. At "Serenity Hall", statesmen held serious discussions with Stevens T. Mason on the subject of the United States Bank and other political subjects when he was seven years old.

He must have known that he was abnormal in some way. Hemans says that Granny Peg and Jackson, the coachman, fed him a lot of African superstition which he took very seriously. Voodooism helped him find some occult explanation for the mysterious world in which he lived, and for his strange difference from the carefree, uninhibited boys about him. He had only one constant companion when he was about this age. This companion exerted a highly marked influence upon him, of very doubtful value indeed. Professor Moir had probably never heard of anything approaching the modern theories of guidance in dealing with precocious children. I imagine that it was great sport, to him, to point out his handiwork when visitors came to "Serenity Hall", asking the boy to answer a lot of complex questions.

Professor Moir was more responsible for the boy's fund of information than anyone else. He used to lie flat on the carpeted floor of the book-lined library with him, tracing out the routes of Caesar's legions on maps. He was teaching his eager pupil the history of Virginia before the child could pronounce "Williamsburg". One of the first noticeable effects of this scholastic experiment was Stevens's growing impatience

with the drudgery of learning. He couldn't read, but he could recite page after page from books. He didn't know what he was saying, but parrot-like, he said it just as the Professor read it to him.

All his life this habit clung to him and caused him endless trouble. His mind would grapple with a situation by deciding what sort of an answer he wanted and blithely skip to it across a yawning chasm of intermediate details.

For that, we blame the Professor. This aged man, a pathetic figure in the strange new land of Kentucky, was like a fish out of water. Virginia was more than his home—it was his creed, his code. Shorn of his scholastic routine and the cloistered gentleness of the college, tossed about over the mountains and deposited like a sack of mail in this frontier city, Professor Moir had little else to do than pump information into the boy's brain.

Circumstances at "Serenity Hall" explain the rest: seclusion in a quiet library; a cultured household three miles from town and half a mile of lawns and shimmering groves from the next house; a very large library, for the Kentucky of that day, laboriously packed and unpacked so many times that every volume in it seemed like a dependent friend; and there was the boy's grandfather, a brilliant philosopher and a teacher for most of his life.

When the boy was seven, John T. finally saw what was going on. He did not relish the prospect of beginning his son's education with college philosophy and having to work backward to the first grade. He wrote to "Raspberry Plain." Out from Virginia, where he had been making the rounds of Mason manors for nearly twenty years, came Mr. January, the tutor.

He was right out of Washington Irving. Tall, skinny, pedantic, fussy, bound up with rules of conduct until he had no more originality than a well-squeezed lemon, Mr. January took the boy in hand.

It was fortunate. He was the perfect foil for Professor Moir's broad philosophical concepts. He had a book. It was a reader. In the book were letters. A is for apple.

The boy rebelled; Mr. January stood over him and made him memorize the appearance of the letters. B was for boredom.

When he was eight, Professor Moir gleefully began teaching him Latin declensions on the sly.

John T. grew richer. Early in 1818 he was one of the most successful men of Lexington after only six years as an attorney. He had other interests. "Serenity Hall" cost a fortune to maintain, but even with that load he had a surplus which ought to be invested. Cautiously he bought a few business properties in Lexington's downtown section. Recklessly he plunged like a gambler into many a little business venture, hoping to come out ahead in some of them.

Not because he was an attorney but merely because he was a wealthy property owner, opportunity had come to him in 1817. The Federal government was about to put into operation the most widely debated political puzzle of the time, the United States Bank. A branch of the bank was to be established in Lexington. Groups of prominent men of the city assembled to talk about it. Because they were mainly Democrats, they opposed the idea in principle. But as long as the Bank planned to open a Lexington branch they decided they might as well handle the deal among themselves. John T. had very definite ideas on the subject, and one of them was that he should have one of the directorships.

And so it came to pass. When the Bank opened its Lexington branch in 1817 it promptly became a gold mine for the directors. It had quite a lot of legal business, having to do with mortgages and trusteeships. John T. and Barry each received many a gratifying fee.

The fact that his father was wealthy did not impress young Stevens. He had always taken that for granted. At this period he saw his father less often, and John T. didn't talk business with him. One day Stevens came to his father and declared that henceforth he was to be called Tom. He said that even though the name Stevens Thomson Mason was a deep honor, and one to be appreciated as such, he didn't like it. It appeared

that Mr. January addressed him as Stevens constantly, and he wanted the family to use some other name. To his father and mother he was always Tom thereafter. To his baby sister Emily, toddling about the splendid halls in the heavy, puffed dresses little girls wore then, he never was anything but Tom all his life. His older sister Mary was suffering along with Mr. January and his incessant penmanship exercises, often making a slip and saying: "Mr. January says that Stevens—" She probably was rebuked for it.

Just an anecdote, one of many. But it shows that he had a well-formulated idea in his mind. He knew his distinguished grandfather's story at that age. He had been drilled in the achievements of the Mason family until he undoubtedly believed that he was foredestined for a great career himself. His formal name would do to sign state papers with, when he became governor of Kentucky someday. In his private life he ought to be Tom.

Thus at the age of eight he made a distinction between his public position and his private life. There is no doubt that he firmly believed that he would become governor of Kentucky. The more he learned about the Masons the more he felt certain that he couldn't dodge fame even if he chose. And he certainly did not choose. He eagerly prepared for it.

Some of the slaves on the place thought he was born to be a celebrity. Emily has left us a vivid, but graceful, succession of scenes from life at "Serenity Hall" which portray Tom as a hero to the blacks. It is a manuscript volume in which she transcribed all her diaries late in life. Names, from frayed old inventories and letters, rise up to people the gaunt old ruin of the mansion with busy blacks, snatching off their hats and bowing when young Tom came sauntering around the corner of the kitchen wing to visit with some of them. Granny Peg, all two hundred pounds of her; old Peff, a chronic rheumatic who walked with a cane but could lift a cask of wine any time he thought he could filch a drink from it; Jackson, the coachman, in his silk hat and white breeches; Tishey, the cook; Sam and Robert, gardeners; Evelena and Coty, the upstairs servants

—nearly fifty in all. The spinning house, the dairy, the long whitewashed stables under the whispering trees, lively with whinnying saddle mounts. A double row of slave cottages on its own street; white fences marching across the bluegrass. A busy little island in a sea of lawn, populated by black servants, quiet and uncomplaining. They served cigars to the gentlemen from silver trays. They appeared out of the shadows with cut-glass wine decanters, and they blended into the background after trimming the dripping candles in their silver holders.

They belonged there; they were part of the very walls and carpets. They would belong to Mr. Tom some day. They adored him.

Little Emily, so tiny that Jackson had to lift her into the carriage, knew each of them as an individual and a friend. Eighty-five years later she was able to recall their names, what they looked like, what they said. Tom never seemed to realize that they were individuals. His mind was on other things.

He was a constant annoyance to the exasperated Mr. January. There was no gainsaying his brilliance of intellect but nobody could make him work. He knew, as soon as the patient old tutor began a sentence, what he was going to say. His mind raced ahead to the point of the idea before Mr. January had thought of it himself. He thought most of his elemental schooling was childish.

Throughout the winter of 1817-1818 Mr. January stood beside his pupil and made him practice penmanship until the lad was dizzy. Tom's undecipherable scrawl gradually straightened out and became, in time, the astonishing engraver's script so familiar to researchers among historical documents of the present day. What Mr. January did to Tom to force him to write this way is one of time's secrets. Even a hundred years later, every letter of his handwriting is plain and as easily read as a page of type. His one concession to his public position was an elaborately scrolled signature as complex and full of figure eights and flourishes as that of Elizabeth of England. It was just the sort of gesture that pleased young

Tom. It was a signature that he designed and practiced purposely to go down in history along with his famous grandfather's.

Years of secluded peace, and of bounteous plenty. Shadows of the brick mansion lengthened across the bluegrass, and seasons changed. A new entry in the Bible, dated 1818: a new baby sister for Tom and Emily and Mary, christened, in grateful recognition of many gracious deeds past and present, Catherine, namesake of John T.'s only surviving sister, Mrs. Barry. In the summer of 1819 there was another such entry—yet another daughter, Laura. Five children would bring sunshine to the old Todd house and help brush away some of the warlike tales about the place before John T. bought it, when battles were fought and men died in its yard.

Tom, for some reason, had selected Emily as his closest confidant and companion. The elder sister Mary seems lost in the corridors of "Serenity Hall"; a dimly seen, lonely little girl who said very little and preferred to keep herself company. It was to Emily that Tom came with his bits of sarcasm about Mr. January; with her he tried to play hooky from the inevitable family prayers which opened the new day. All his life Emily was the only person, male or female, to whom he really said what he thought. His sister was always his closest friend.

The year 1819 was a milestone in Mason history. It was a year of rapid decisions, excitement, unpredictable events, strange goings-on.

Early in the year John T.'s brother, Armistead Thomson Mason, was dramatically killed in a pistol duel with his cousin, Colonel John McCarty. A mounted messenger rode with the tragic news as fast as horses would carry him across the mountains. The news arrived in the remarkably fast time of three weeks. John T. summoned the Barrys to a family council to hear its contents.

From the letter it appeared that Armistead had been appointed to the United States Senate by the State Legislature, and was serving his full six-year term. He was another Mason

who was personally a famous popular hero; a colonel of cavalry in the War of 1812 and the chief figure of the Democratic party in the northern section of the State. His own popularity caused his death.

The Federalists had put up a candidate named Charles Fenton Mercer from the Loudon district for election to the House in 1818. The Party was aroused about it. That district held the balance of power in the electoral votes for the coming Presidential election, and it had to be carried at all costs. The State leaders persuaded Armistead to resign from the Senate and campaign for the House, as a Democrat, against Mercer.

The election contest was so bitter that it split the whole district, ruined friendships, started family feuds. Armistead T. Mason lost, by a mere handful of votes.

Colonel McCarty was a Federalist and one of Mercer's chief lieutenants. He took violent exception to some of Armistead's campaign remarks and called him out in January, 1819, on the historic old duelling ground at Bladensburg, Maryland, with a pair of silver-mounted duelling pistols. At the signal, both weapons cracked in unison. Mason's ball shattered McCarty's left arm. McCarty's ball hit the wooden handle of the pistol in Mason's hand, split into two parts, and half of it glanced off and hit him squarely in the heart. He died there on the field, with McCarty standing over him.

The letter caused hasty packing, hurried hitching of the four biggest horses to the great coach. Because of the expected baby, Elizabeth could not go. Young Tom went. It was his first visit "home".

"Raspberry Plain" was silent with mourning. Armistead had left a slender, weeping widow and two children, a son and a daughter. The son was six years younger than Tom; just a wide-eyed little toddler. To Tom's great disgust, he bore the name of Stevens Thomson Mason. Tom's first cousin, and now there were two of them! Armistead didn't know whether John T.'s family would survive in the Kentucky wilderness, and he was taking no chances. If John T.'s son died, his would survive to carry on the hallowed name. To that astonish-

ing degree did the proud Masons of Virginia set up barriers against the disappearance of their illustrious names.

In practice, Armistead's theory worked just the other way. His son Stevens went to military school and was just the right age for a commission when the Mexican War of 1848 appeared to bring the phrase "manifest destiny" into the vernacular. He was a captain in Robert E. Lee's mounted rifles, and he got a Mexican bullet in the brain trying to drag some of Lee's artillery up the blood-drenched mountainside at Cerro Gordo. His death simplified matters considerably for historians, some of whom would have been nonplussed had two men named Stevens Thomson Mason emerged into the national spotlight simultaneously.

There was mourning at "Raspberry Plain", and Armistead's little son stared up at his tall, wavy-haired cousin without worrying particularly about what the future held for him. Then, quietly, John T. departed. The long journey homeward gave Tom a chance to forget about the cruel fate which had bestowed his name on somebody else. It was forgotten. As soon as he arrived home, another sudden event eclipsed it.

James Monroe, President of the United States, was coming to "Serenity Hall" for a visit. The *Lexington Gazette* sputtered angrily about it, muttering deep in its mouthful of wooden type about who did Monroe think he was, anyway, to gad about the country spreading a doctrine he called "the era of good feeling" at the taxpayers' expense?

The President had a very good reason for visiting Lexington. Perhaps his decision to quarter the Presidential party at John T.'s home was an afterthought, but it was a good one. The grumbling Lexington newspaper was Whig in sympathy, meaning that anything a Democrat did was patently the result of an ulterior motive and needed looking into. Mr. Monroe had just finished a very disappointing session of Congress and was going to Tennessee with Andrew Jackson for a rest at "The Hermitage". Lexington was a stop on the route, nothing more.

Everywhere he went, Monroe spread the gospel of peace, of

security, of getting along with the country's neighbors. Lexington was a hotbed of anti-Administration criticism, thanks largely to the *Gazette* and Henry Clay's frequent letters to the editor under a Washington date line. Clay, exhausted after the adjournment of Congress, was on the way home, too. They were scheduled to arrive about the same time. Violent enemies on every point of policy, Clay and Monroe were none too cordial personally. John T. anticipated a lively visit.

The President arrived first, in June, 1819, to be feted by the cheering citizens in a long parade which Tom and his father watched. Veterans of the War of 1812 turned out in coonskin caps and leather jackets. Cavalry, in new uniforms dazzling with gold buttons and plumes, rode sedately as a guard of honor. The *Gazette* came out that day with a growl about the cavalry. It was the editor's opinion that such a display was not in good taste to mark the arrival of a man who happened to be merely the head of a democratic country. It smacked of royalty. Copies of it were flung down into the mud as spontaneous cheers went up. There were speeches, and John T. stood beside Monroe while Barry delivered the official address of welcome. Tom saw him, saw Monroe whispering to John T. behind the back of his hand during Barry's speech. He didn't hear a word Barry said. His eyes were on the tired-looking man at the end of the platform: Andrew Jackson.

"Old Hickory" was the kind of hero who seemed to be acknowledging applause all the time. Everywhere he went, mobs surrounded him. The worst mob scene he ever survived, according to his biographer Parton, was his arrival in New Orleans at the conclusion of this same trip. Lexington was nearly as bad. Whether the citizens were Whigs or Democrats or Federalists they howled, whooped, milled around him. At Lexington they pushed against the speakers' platform so violently that they tore the bunting decorations off. Nobody was listening when the President arose to speak. Not a word of his address has been preserved.

Andrew Jackson was in the Senate; Clay was Speaker of the House, and had launched a bitter campaign against Jackson

about a year before, aimed at debunking him as a hero. Jackson preferred not to stop at Lexington at all because of the violence of his hatred for Clay; the two might meet on the street and be forced to speak.

When the speech was over, John T. and Tom seated Jackson between them at a reception dinner at Keen's Hotel. It was late before the party arrived at "Serenity Hall" but Jackson had plenty of time to rest. He stayed there four days, with a Sunday included. John T. said that he lay sprawled out on a sofa in the parlor most of the time, rubbing his left arm. Truth was, as several biographers have noted, Jackson was physically sick and utterly weary. Periodically he would have spasms of pain in that left arm, where Jesse Benton had accurately plunked a bullet some five years before. The bullet was still embedded in the bone of his arm. Physical exhaustion made it ache like a throbbing tooth. At such times, Jackson was as surly as a bear.

This was one of the times. He had to pay a duty call on Mrs. Clay, next door, because Mr. Monroe went there. He was relieved to find that Mr. Clay was still on the road somewhere between Washington and Lexington. His relief was so evident that he began to notice Tom, and joke with him.

If Jackson thought that Tom was a cute little boy to be patted on the head, he was soon forced to change his mind. Tom's mother came in to find Jackson laid out there on the sofa arguing vociferously with Tom about something. He sat up and took a hot toddy from her hand, muttered "Thank you, ma'am", and lay back staring at Tom incredulously. He gained a powerful attachment to Tom Mason during that visit. The President and John T. and Barry and most of the Kentucky Democrats were outside in the rose garden, settling the fate of the country over cigars and juleps. Jackson wanted surcease from argument; enjoyed nothing more than resting on the sofa and marvelling at Tom Mason.

The boy always loomed up in Jackson's mind as one of his chief memories of that visit to Lexington. He remembered John T. mainly as Tom's father. The visit exerted a strange

influence on the subsequent history of the Northwest. When Jackson began packing to leave he was calling Tom "my son" and "my boy", and begging Tom to come and see him some time.

When Tom did, it was a different Jackson, and a different Mason.

There is a little incident about this visit which only Parton, among Jackson's biographers, seems to have appreciated. Jackson and Monroe got away on schedule and made the town of Lebanon, Kentucky, for breakfast the following morning. Jackson limped out of his carriage and walked into the town's only inn. He ordered breakfast and bought a copy of a newspaper containing an account of his arrival in Lexington. As he sat there reading it, Henry Clay walked in.

There was an embarrassing silence. Jackson stuck his furrowed face deeper into the newspaper. Clay said: "How do you do, General?" Jackson said: "Ugh." Immediately an argument broke out. Neither man had eaten breakfast; both had spent a hard night in their carriages on the road. They argued up and down, while the President stared. Jackson openly accused Clay of lying about him; claimed that Clay was trying to besmirch his military reputation. Clay told Jackson he was a fool; that he had his eye on the Presidency and that he was totally unfitted by training or temperament to hold such an office. Jackson was so enraged that he stalked out of the place without breakfast and without even waiting for the President. A military attaché of the party was taking rapid notes, unknown to either. Parton printed the conversation almost word for word.

This angry meeting of the titans, with poor Mr. Monroe being ignored entirely, explains a great deal. During the next session of Congress there was open war between the two. Clay finally took his revenge, and how sweet was the taste of victory in his mouth! He beat Jackson out of the Presidency in 1824 on a parliamentary trick which was the biggest defeat

of Jackson's life. Neither man ever spoke to the other again. An accidental meeting, but it charted the course of history.

2

Young Tom Mason celebrated his eighth birthday at "Serenity Hall," and thereafter saw it no more.

It is quite impossible for a historian to explain what happened. We know the facts, but dusty entries on old records often fail to tell a coherent story. Only a psychiatrist can say why John T. Mason threw his fortune to the winds.

He owned everything a man of his times would want. His faith in the new West and in the city of Lexington had been more than justified. His estate was a recognized sight-seeing attraction. Lexington people used to drive out there on the customary Sunday afternoon airings just to gaze over the high white fences in awe. He had one of the best law practices in Lexington and one of its largest annual incomes.

A hundred and twenty years later, a wit named Robert Quillen wrote a definition of a professional man: one who makes a fortune at his own business and loses it by investing in somebody else's. If John T. could have read just that one little sentence in the musty old *Gazette*, his life might have been different.

Probably John T. would have read it and forgotten it. He was one of those men who manage to become successful with only half their minds. With the other half he was always dreaming—weaving dreams of what he was going to do, someday. Most men are never satisfied, no matter how prosperously things are going. This pouty air of dissatisfaction seems to go with successful men, at least in the opinion of men who are not successes themselves. Executives are constantly demanding the impossible and grouching until they get it, whereupon they demand something a little more impossible. Washington was such a man, forever finding fault with his subordinates, complaining to his diary of what scamps they were, seldom praising anyone.

John T. did not have that particular trouble, but he was always telling himself that he could make more money with his investments than he could in his law practice. He was cursed with a craving for change. There was a limit to his tolerance of routine. When that limit was reached, he attained his maximum pressure and blew a gasket.

In 1819 John T. was eyeing the first feeble appearances of industry. He poked around among cavernous sheds and sooty shops full of strange iron machines. He asked questions. He compiled logical summaries of the prospects of industry in Kentucky. He convinced himself, at least, that Kentucky was destined to become the workshop of America.

Plotting the future is a harmless sport, but backing one's dope sheets with one's own cash is not a sport but a highly specialized profession. Some few men make fortunes that way; most lose. John T. was basing his forecasts on increase of population, emigration from the East, improvement in the rivers and roads, known factors. He could not foresee that the railroad, for instance, would in the next thirty years centralize industry in the heavily populated East and keep Kentucky predominantly agricultural for a century. He could not foresee that those masses of dusky slaves of his, chanting spirituals in their cabin doorways on warm Sunday nights, were going to become central figures in a struggle that would nearly tear the nation apart. He could not chart the influence of that war in his plans for Kentucky's future, because he could not foresee any such movement of forces which might cause it.

Those things were far in the future, hidden behind the opaque screen of time. We can analyze the experience of a century and see quickly that he was wrong. He could not see any such signs at the time.

John T., in a tall beaver hat and well-tailored tail coat, stood squinting into the glare of a roaring fire under a smelting pot in a little ironworks at Owingsville, a microscopic village on Beaver Creek in Bath County some thirty-five miles from Lexington. There was some ore, newly mined from a deep

shaft sunk slantwise into the looming hill. The little shop breathed fire from its open door, sticking out its tongue at the hill. A shaft car slid quickly down the incline while a cable rattled over a pulley.

He watched while the blast of cold air aroused the fire to white, roaring anger. He saw the ore liquefied in the heat of the furnace; saw the dross skimmed off, and the incandescent ore poured from ladles into moulds. When they were cool he picked up new pig iron, fondled it, studied it, nodded his head at the men who pointed to it and shouted information over the roar of the furnace.

In industry, he felt, lay his future. In industry he could produce new wealth, help build the State. The little company owned the hill, and the rattling shaft car, and the smelter. It produced something of value, something Kentucky needed. With more money it would become a big company, and produce more and more.

Some other "gentlemen", as the act of incorporation states, and John T. Mason organized a new company to operate this mine during the summer of 1818. Later, in the fall, he bought an interest in a distillery at Mount Sterling, a village which was on his way from Lexington to the iron mine at Owingsville. Then he waited for his profits.

About this time he casually gave a friend his endorsement on a note at the Bank of the United States, without thinking much about it. But it was a short-term note for a very large amount; the friend defaulted and the Bank—the very Bank where he held a directorship—regretfully notified him that he would have to make good the amount.

In the fall of 1819 John T. saw nothing but ruin ahead. He had sold property in Lexington and paid the note, but it had cost him his directorship. The "gentlemen" who were his partners in the Owingsville mine turned out to be practical businessmen, not gentlemen at all. They had to have more money—more money. John T. had to supply it.

He sold "Serenity Hall". The slaves sadly loaded the long caravan of wagons again. Down came the books from the

library walls. Into hogsheds of sawdust went the fragile china and the gleaming silver. Once more the Masons were on the move. In Mount Sterling, a village near the ironworks, the caravan halted before a gloomy-looking old house on the edge of town, overgrown with weeds, damp inside and with windows half big enough. This was home. "Serenity Hall" was thirty-five miles behind them in distance, but actually it was something out of another world. Few people in Mount Sterling had ever heard of the Masons. Villagers told each other that the "Davis place" was going to be occupied again, and how much were eggs worth this morning?

Tom Mason helped the family unpack, and his father escorted him back to Lexington on a pony which Tom thought was the finest animal in the world. He was eight years old, reading Latin easily, writing in the precise script of an adult but unable to understand even the rudiments of arithmetic. Professor Moir's work had been done so well that he had completed most of the required reading for entrance requirements for college. In contrast, he could not spell the words he recited.

There was a private school for young gentlemen at Lexington. John Barry, his cousin, attended. Arrangements were made for Tom to enter. He was to live at the Barrys'. Emily's reminiscences announce that he was very happy there. Tom himself never mentioned it.

It was Tom's first physical contact with a group of boys his own age. John Barry was younger and smaller, but he was as stocky as a bull calf and had his father's carefree ability to get along with anybody. He valiantly undertook to make Tom feel at ease among these boys, but the effort was wasted. Tom froze up, withdrew in shyness and was silent.

After some months Tom thawed out and took a more active part in the games. I have studied all the records of this period to find an anecdote describing how long Tom required to thaw out, but nobody seems to know. He had a wide notoriety as a boy prodigy, a superior little boy who always knew the

answers. He must have been an insufferable little eight-year-old.

The penalty of precocity is never greater than in the company of a group of boys. There is a pathetic loneliness, a sense of being an outsider, somehow. Tom was one of the youngest boys in the school and he had a long lead on them in scholarship. He was too young to be chosen for the games, too advanced to share the burden of study. It must have been a very unhappy first year.

Gradually he won a place for himself. His record was never a distinguished one at this private school. Tom wasn't studying very hard, but he was learning how to get along with others, how not to lead with his chin, when to keep still in class even if he knew the answer that stumped the rest of the boys. During these school years he added very little to his store of knowledge. His trick of making himself popular had to be acquired, the hard way, month by month. Popularity is the secret of every politician's success. If Tom were dreaming about being governor of Kentucky he'd have to start learning that secret right here in prep school. He learned it. He learned how to make himself prominent, and he never forgot.

On week ends and vacations during these childhood years, Tom rode back to Mount Sterling to roll luxuriously in the verdant grass. He loved the "Davis place". If it weren't for the multiple tragedies of these years he could have happily rounded out his life there. But John T. was going broke. Food was scarce, clothes were tattered and Tom didn't have to be a boy prodigy to see it.

John T. had farmed out some of his slaves so that he wouldn't have to keep them. He was away from home most of the time, and he'd come back in a vile temper and utterly exhausted. Tom didn't have to ask what had happened. He knew his father had been victimized again.

John T. was a gentleman, a man of honor. To the end of his days he believed every associate of his to be the same fortress of unimpeachable honesty. One of his worst failings was his readiness to believe what he heard, and forget to ask for proof. He was being skinned alive in that ironworks. His

partners were trying to squeeze him out. He had impoverished himself to raise money to build the new plant the partners said they had to have. When he couldn't raise another dollar they decided that it was, after all, too good a thing to divide with him. They tried to buy his interest for a pitiful fraction of what he had invested. He was told he'd have to put in more money—more money, or the business would perish. But he wouldn't sell.

Tragedy was bowing his head at home, and at the mine he was just a woolly lamb whose function in life was to be shorn. In the year 1822 his oldest daughter Mary, wasting away to skeleton thinness with a malady then not fully understood, died after a lingering illness. The effect of the heart-breaking death of this quiet little twelve-year-old girl laid Tom's mother perilously close to the grave herself. Just at that time she was about to give birth to her seventh daughter and eleventh child. Her husband's fortune was visibly melting away. The times were bad; she knew intuitively that her husband's partners were defrauding him. Mary's death brought her to a climax.

The floors were cold and the corners were drafty. There was the smell of cooking all through the gaunt old house. Granny Peg was there to fetch and carry, but John T. paced the floor in anguish. A skilled surgeon from Lexington was upstairs at the bedside. When the babe was born only fast work by the doctor saved either life. For days it was a delicate balance. Both survived, but neither mother nor daughter fully recovered.

Another entry in the Bible: Theodosia. A mite of a baby, brought into the world in the midst of a family crisis and doomed to suffer all her brief life. The good old days at "Serenity Hall" were just legends to Theodosia. She knew nothing but trouble, incessant migration from one Kentucky house to another a little worse; never knew relief from the constant battle to find food and keep the home intact. She didn't live long enough to see her big brother's fame shoot skyward like a rocket and cling there, at its zenith, for a

decade. Her life hung by a thread for the first few weeks. She was an invalid all her life.

Elizabeth's cheeks were gaunt. She aged rapidly. John T.'s upstanding shock of black hair was shot through with gray.

While he lived at Mount Sterling, his Lexington properties mysteriously shrank in value. Taxes were shooting higher; assessments against property owners to build roads were coming fast. His income from Lexington was a pittance, and it was all he had to live on. He had given up his law practice entirely. He had no clients in a place like Mount Sterling, a village with two or three stores and a dozen lawyers to fight for occasional wills and justice-court pleadings.

Once in 1824 he petitioned the State Legislature for permission to organize a lottery to raise funds to build a road to his mine from the neighboring health resort of Olympian Springs. Permission was finally granted. He still owned a small share in the distillery in the village, but it had only a local market and never made any appreciable income for him.

Down, down went the family fortunes. Weeks dragged into months, and years. John T. kept his head above water and food in his family's mouths. That was all.

In 1825 he was given a temporary relief when a building boom hit Lexington and his lots briefly climbed in valuation. He sold some of them and used the money to buy equities in other properties. Hardly any of his Lexington property was fully paid for. The windfall gave him a chance to move the family back to Lexington for a short time in 1825 and fall headfirst into another bit of luck.

His benefactor, oddly, was Henry Clay.

In 1825 Henry Clay was on the bottom in the scale of Lexington popularity. Kentucky, after a generation of frenzied loyalty, had turned against him so bitterly that he wanted to take his family away from there. Even the patrician, white-haired Mrs. Clay urged him to go.

Clay had engineered his deal against Jackson during the historic Presidential campaign of 1824. He had won; Jackson

received a large majority of the popular votes cast but Clay beat him in the House of Representatives. There were three candidates: Jackson, Democrat; John Quincy Adams, Whig; and William H. Crawford, Federalist. None had an outright majority of the electoral votes. Under the Constitutional provision governing such contingencies, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives wherein sat gimlet-eyed, vengeful Henry Clay, enthroned as Speaker.

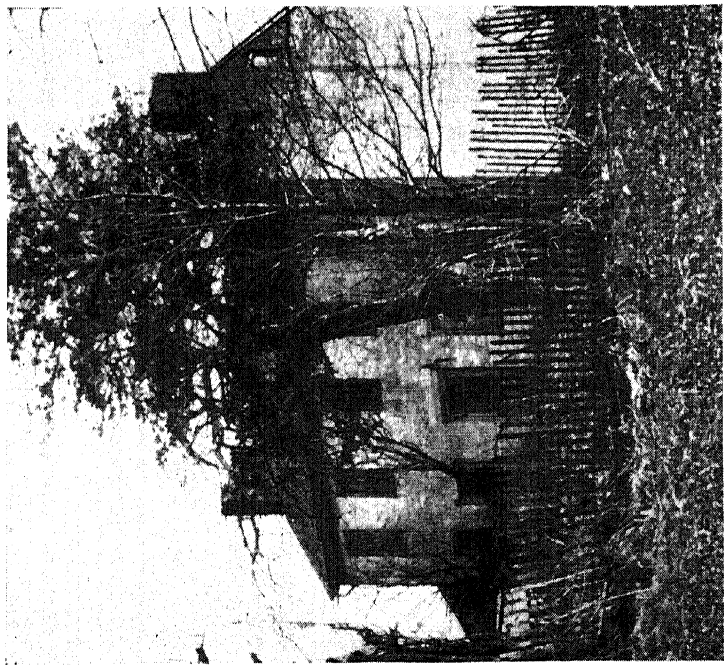
Clay himself appeared as a compromise candidate and managed to secure the electoral votes of three states. This maneuver cut the vote for each individual candidate even further below a majority. General Jackson's name was marked on the ballots as a second-choice favorite in three more states; he was gaining in popular support every day. Clay had only one opportunity for stopping him, and he used it. He appointed a House committee to recommend a choice. Then he packed the committee.

Clay did not like Adams, but he hated Jackson so bitterly that he preferred to see Adams win. When the committee reported back to the House, Clay invited the members of the Senate to come in and watch the roll call. One by one the vote was counted by states, not by individuals. Adams received a majority on the first ballot. He defeated Jackson by two votes.

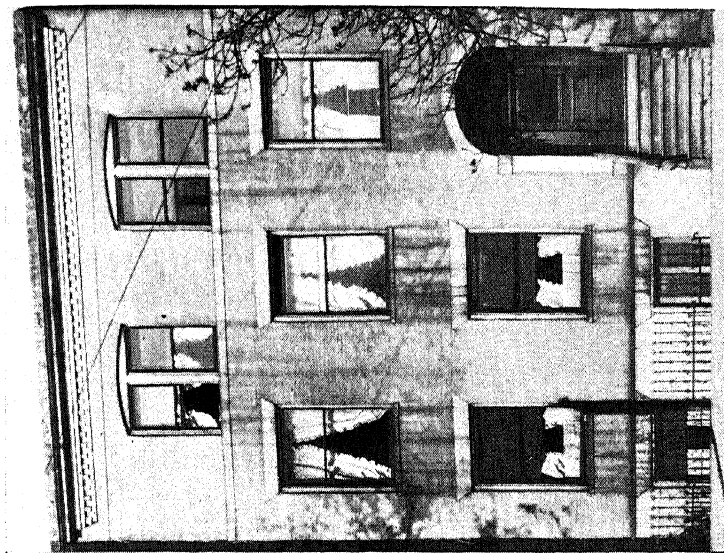
When the news reached Kentucky there was hissing, and mass meetings. Clay did not even return to Lexington after the adjournment. Adams immediately offered him the highest of all Cabinet posts, that of Secretary of State. Clay wrote a few letters to his friends saying that he was undecided about accepting, relating that there was a good deal of opposition to him both at home and in Washington. He attributed that to the "ebullition of the moment, the offspring of chagrin and disappointment." He accepted. And he did not return to Lexington.

He solved his problem by writing John T. and offering him a very low rental if he cared to occupy "Ashland", the Clay estate, during Clay's four-year term as Secretary of State. John T. accepted.

About that time Mary Armistead Mason, the grand old



THE OLD "DAVIS PLACE," MOUNT STERLING, KENTUCKY, where the Mason family endured severe hardships. Young Tom and his mother tried to make a lawn out of this stubble-grown yard.



MASON'S RESIDENCE ON JEFFERSON AVENUE, DETROIT. The house was torn down years ago and the site is now a parking lot.



JOHN T. MASON. From a miniature made in New York after Governor Stevens T. Mason's death, when John T. was about fifty-five.



EMILY MASON. A family photograph made in New York about 1895. From the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Museum, Lansing.

matriarch of "Raspberry Plain", died quietly with none of her four children at her bedside. In her will she bequeathed some of her own slaves to John T. He made a hurried trip to Virginia to assist in the settlement of her affairs. When he returned he did not take the new slaves to "Ashland". He found employment for them, and used the proceeds for living expenses.

Tom liked "Ashland" because of its location. He had a pony, and rode it to school every day. Among the three or four surviving slaves in the household was Jackson, the faithful coachman who no longer had a coach to drive. Tom used to canter to school every morning on this pony, like a young aristocrat, with Jackson astride a horse following respectfully a few paces to the left and to the rear.

Once again he was in his element: good clothes, fine food, a servant to accompany him. John T. was feeling a little more cheerful, too. The boom at Lexington continued throughout the year. Floods of eager humanity were coursing through the mountains, sweeping downward into Kentucky, swelling into the full force of the tide which peopled the West in one generation. Endless wagon trains of Virginians and New Englanders and New Yorkers rumbled and creaked along the twisty roads. Veterans of the War of 1812 were taking up the land grants awarded them for military services as fast as new roads were opened into their areas. Pike highways were being hewn through the stone gaps in the Blue Ridge and Cumberland summits. Inns were built. Settlements sprang up around the inns. Along the muddy Ohio there were puffing steamboats and new towns at every anchorage.

Good things can't last forever. John T. was guessing wrong; he believed that industry would find a market readily enough among these hordes of land-hungry emigrants. The family lived at "Ashland" not quite three years. By that time John T. was unable to keep it up any longer.

Tom might have known. He was adaptable enough to live anywhere and have a good time. Whether at "Ashland" or some little cottage far out in the bald foothills known in Kentucky as "The Knobs", Tom grew taller and happier. In Lex-

ington there were parades for some reason or other every few months. Tom and John Barry and some other youngsters from the school always managed to get through the crowds for a close view. They saw Lafayette, when he made his personal visit to Lexington in May, 1825. They were on the platform with the great people when, on July 4, 1826, William T. Barry was the official orator of the day. A few weeks later they turned out again for a monster funeral procession. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, the father of President John Quincy Adams, had died on the same day. Mourning was nation-wide.

In 1827 Tom was almost sixteen. John T. was moving again, but Tom begged leave to stay in Lexington with the Barrys. He had just been accepted as a freshman in the autumn class at Transylvania University.

3

Inevitably, disaster came to John T. Mason. Specifically it came in the collapse of the Beaver Creek Iron Works at Owingsville. But it would have come anyhow. He was no businessman, and he could not fight with the weapons which constituted sharp business tricks in 1827.

Tom heard from him infrequently. He knew the family was poor, but not hungry. They were back at the "Davis place" at Mount Sterling, waiting for winter with the stolid resignation of the vanquished.

Grandpa, the splendid old Professor Moir, died quietly of old age at "Ashland" in 1826. He was buried at Lexington. Tom's grandmother was a wrinkled, quavery old woman. She was hardly able to understand what had happened. The kitchen fires smoked all the blue out of Tom's mother's eyes; left them a dull, beaten gray. There were wrinkles at the corners of her mouth.

There was Granny Peg peeling potatoes; Peff to weed the garden; Jackson to take care of John T.'s horse. The others were gone. Tishey the cook was dead. One or two had quietly

stolen across the Ohio River to freedom. John T. didn't care. There were that many less mouths to feed.

A sad procession, barricaded all winter against the siege of storm and limping forth in summer to find cheer at some sunnier place. They rented little houses, sometimes at Mud Lick or Indian Fields, just to give the girls a respite from the clammy old brick house at Mount Sterling. Emily and Catherine and Laura, running and laughing through the bluegrass; Theodosia lying limply on a blanket, staring with piteous eyes. And there was their mother. She was grateful for sunshine.

When Emily was twelve her mother found some hidden, cherished gem among her keepsakes which gave the little girl a year's schooling at Madame Mantelli's fine Lexington private school for girls. Where she got it, we don't know. Emily didn't say.

Tom was finding college absurdly easy. He liked it mainly because he liked the serious respect for scholarship which was always the hallmark of the small classical colleges. At Transylvania the whole atmosphere was serious. It had an enrollment of about two hundred boys, and offered strict classical courses. Knowledge was approached reverently.

He attended classes in a brand-new building made of white Tennessee stone and full of marble floors, the gift of an early alumnus. Henry Clay as executor of the will of the donor, named Morrison, designed the building in the severe classical manner: tall columns, Greek pediment, frescoes, impressive stone steps. The building itself crowned the very summit of a rather sharp hill, and these steps led up to the second story, which was the main floor. College wasn't hard on Tom's brain. It was more of a strain on his wind, climbing those stairs every day.

Emily was happy as a princess at Madame Mantelli's French-style school. She made a thorough study of everything she saw and heard. By candlelight she wrote in her small leather-bound diary—pinched little letters which look like the first attempts at rhetoric of a very small girl. When Emily was

86 or so she transcribed these diaries and gave us a glimpse of her life at Madame Mantelli's. She must have been a delightful child. Everything was beautiful; all her fellow pupils were splendid; everything she saw was a new marvel.

"Here we danced and sang and were as gay as only French people can make a house," she wrote. "Madame played the violin, her son Waldemar the clarinet, and Ma'amselle Marie danced with a grace beyond anything I had ever imagined. Ma'amselle Louise made the best waffles ever eaten. It was a happy household, giving happiness to all within its reach, and I got on rapidly."

Waffles. Waffles in 1828? Was Emily sure about that? Yes, she was sure. The waffle iron is in Michigan's State Museum today, where any skeptic can see it. The iron was old and black when it came to Lexington. Forged of bar iron in Louisiana many years before, it was a very long and very heavy pair of pliers, with waffle grids in place of jaws. The handles were all of four feet long, with rings on each side. Ma'amselle Louise hung the long utensil from a pothook over the kitchen fire until it was hot enough. Then she withdrew it, opened it, greased each grid, poured in the batter and hung it back on the pothook again.

The grids are the same size and shape of the rectangular electric waffle irons of today—about four by eight inches. It was a simple enough gadget. Any blacksmith could make one. When the waffle was browned on one side Ma'amselle Louise pulled the heavy handles off the ring, turned it over and hung it up again. It didn't flash any red lights, ring bells or stick out a little chromium tongue when the waffle was done to the precise shade of brown. But it produced waffles.

On his sixteenth birthday, October 27, 1827, Tom Mason had attained the stature and strength of a man. Taller than his father, he was. He was an inch and a half under six feet, Emily said, just to make him sound bigger. But he was skinny as a rail and weighed a mere hundred and twenty. Narrow, boyish shoulders did not fill the puffed and padded tail coat he wore.

They never did, even later in life. Some sketches of him show these narrow shoulders in painful clarity but his official portraits always show a well-tailored broadcloth torso which might have belonged to a stevedore.

His inquisitive blue eyes were larger and more richly blue than ever. Tom's face was losing its heart-shaped baby outlines and beginning to show his father's strong chin. The chin had a dimple in it; the waves of dark-brown hair were precise and regular; well-arched black eyebrows completed a handsome picture. His beauty was an outrage against the crude log-cabin and dogwood background of Mount Sterling. In Lexington he was a youth to set all the girls at Madame Mantelli's into a flutter. He walked as erect as a soldier; head up and held so far back under the weight of his big beaver hat that his upper eyelids drooped enough to make him look arrogantly superior.

Thoughts of superiority and his appeal to adolescent girls never occurred to him while he attended college. Regardless of his appearance he was a mighty hard-working youth with no time or energy for anything but study. He was devouring the undergraduate course in great bites, his nose in his books and his eye on the calendar. John T. did not have to tell him that each passing day might be his last as a college student. Tom knew it in a hundred ways, from the clipped evasiveness of his father's letters to the ever-mounting air of suspense and defeat which they bore.

What hair John T. had was turning white. He clung to his conniving partners at the ironworks with the rigid doggedness of a drowning man who clings to any floating thing. He was tortured, but he wouldn't sell. He wouldn't give up and let those men laugh at him for a fool. He stayed. He kept another set of books himself. As fast as he stopped extortions and swindlings in the plant, crooked agents cheated him out of funds from the sale of his pig iron.

They called that smart business in 1827. John T. became his own sales manager. Then, in self-defense, he became the whole sales force as well. He saddled his horse, stuffed saddle-

bags with blank forms and bills of lading, and started on the road.

Selling pig iron in 1827 was something like being an itinerant preacher. There was nothing to correspond with modern sales methods because there was no way to exchange money with any certainty. There was no way to sell a product at all except the way peddlers still sell cloth and leather to the monks of Tibet and Sinkiang, and the way the Romans sold bronze and brass to the barbarians of Central Europe. John T. took samples and went forth to barter.

If he got an order he couldn't collect for it until the pig iron had been unloaded at the customer's warehouse. Then according to the custom of the time he had to wait thirty or sixty days. The customer received a big discount for cash, but if he paid in bank notes he did not earn quite so much of a discount. The customer could mail bank notes of some backwoods bank the partners had never heard of. They were subject to a complicated system of discounts which varied from day to day. He could send a draft on some well-known bank in Lexington, Louisville or Cincinnati which was gladly accepted at par. Or—he could stall.

Whatever he did, he forced the manufacturer to finance the whole deal and carry the load while the customer was using the foundry's money. Nobody had established credit in the backwoods. It was a case of sell the product, wait, and try to get your money.

Most customers made all their purchases through commission houses up and down the broad Ohio River. These were middlemen who never saw the goods they bought and sold. They did not warehouse them, but merely collected a few orders from various customers for similar merchandise and bought it from the producer for delivery directly to the customer. They might have twenty little blacksmith shops that wanted pig iron; they bought a bargeload from a producer and directed the barge to stop at all twenty docks. For this service they charged the producer a commission.

By dealing over a period of years with commission houses

which supplied established customers, a manufacturer would keep production at a fairly reliable figure. But a new firm located far down a tiny creek in the bleakest section of Kentucky's foothills could not interest the commission merchants. And they held the buying power.

That was why John T. spent the year 1828 on the road, peddling pig iron from office to office, and that was why his hair turned white. Today's purchasing agent is often abrupt but usually courteous. Those commission merchants regarded sarcasm as one of their chief accomplishments. They kept manufacturers waiting day after day for a five-minute interview. They softened hard-boiled factory managers until they got what they wanted at any price they chose to quote.

Some of John T.'s pig iron could go out by wagons over the back-breaking hills to near-by towns which had blacksmith shops. That, until John T. bought his interest, was the only market the ironworks had. John T. sent forth flatboats, brimful of dull-gray pig, to ground on sand bars and overturn in rapids. Crews poled the floatboats down the creek to Licking River, thence day after sweaty day downstream to the rushing current of the broad Ohio. On the big river the flatboat had to go downstream. It could not go upstream unless it was towed by one of the new steamboats at a prohibitive price.

He had to find business downstream. Two or three months after him came the cumbersome flatboat, putting in at swarming river towns that were hastily being nailed together, unloading pig iron at blacksmith shops, at carriage shops, at foundries that made iron cooking pots and rifle barrels. He sold to anybody who would buy two or three hundred pounds of pig. As a salesman, he was superb. He oversold his plant to the point where he could keep it at capacity for a year. Then he turned his whole attention to collecting.

Businessmen could beat him at that game. His only markets were the new settlements, and nobody had any "hard money". They all wanted to pay him in scrip, in wildcat bank notes, in anything but good money. Solvent factories would not buy from him because they had long-term contracts with commission

houses. He could see that there wasn't enough of this odd-job business to keep his smelter hot, and he laid siege to the commission houses like a general before a walled city.

Once in Cincinnati, then a good-sized river city, he persuaded a new commission house to try him. He sold a staggering order of pig and finished iron. He sold bar stock of graded sizes, strap stock, castings to dimensions furnished on drawings. It was a windfall. Smiling, he hurried home.

The little plant bustled noisily to work forthwith. Wooden patterns were carved for the castings. A small draw mill was built for the bars and straps. The order was finished on time and delivered promptly. The customer paid the commission house in silver dollars, a breath-taking act of business honesty.

John T. did not know about the silver dollars until later. His remittance didn't come. The firm's capital was gone, spent in building new equipment and additional payrolls. The firm's credit was gone. It could not borrow another dollar and all its previous notes were due. Banks at Lexington and at Mount Sterling clamored for payment. John T. finally had to go and see what had happened.

The commission house was empty. The whole staff had vanished. So had John T.'s money and the hope of becoming wealthy in business.

It was only eight thousand dollars, not enough to wrinkle the brow of a modern steel-mill's accountants. To John T., as he clamped his trembling hands to his white head in utter despair, there was some kind of poetic justice about the disaster. It cleaned him out, but it also bankrupted all of his partners. After years of squeezing him out of a business that seemed too good for a mere investor, they themselves fell victims to a swindler who had even outsmarted them.

The white-hot, roaring flames under the smelting furnace died into cold ashes. The mine tunnels fell in, eventually, as nature put on a squeeze of her own. Weather curled the clap-board sides of the mill shack. Today one must be an archaeologist to find the site.

There was weeping in the cold, gloomy house at Mount

Sterling. John T. Mason was sued by the Bank of the United States—the very bank in which he had once held an honored directorship. He was served with judgments. All his equities in Lexington property were grabbed up and swallowed. Jackson, his faithful coachman for fifteen years, was seized by marshals and led away to face the ordeal of the auction block.

Only Granny Peg and Peff and a little negro boy were left. They belonged to Elizabeth.

Life had to go on, and the Masons existed through that tragic winter. John T., with bent shoulders and dragging feet, stood in the bare little parlor of his stricken house gazing at one of the finest law libraries in Kentucky. The marshals hadn't seized that. He still had, in his trained brain, the means of making a living. Over the bookshelves hung a certificate proclaiming that he had been admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the State of Kentucky. He had almost forgotten.

In winter's fiercest gale, Elizabeth cried out in labor. They were snowbound; there was no doctor, no horse to hurry for a doctor. John T. dragged himself upstairs like a man going to the scaffold. It was a day that haunted him until the end of his life.

Elizabeth lived, but the babe died within a few hours. John T. tried to get to the village for a preacher—any preacher. He failed. There was not one comforting soul.

With his own hands he built a tiny coffin and dug a fresh grave. The three children knelt beside him on the windswept hillside while he fumbled in a gilt-edged leather Bible with trembling fingers. His voice faltered, then began:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life—"

It was the last Mason grave in Kentucky.

CHAPTER III

A GENTLEMAN TO SEE THE PRESIDENT

I

JOHN T. collected his little brood around his sides and grieved. Tom packed up his ruffled shirts and satin vest and sadly left the Greek colonnade of Transylvania University. Emily's year at Madame Mantelli's was up; she quietly came home, too.

There was food, and there was wood to keep them warm. The old "Davis place" was regarded as a pretty good home for a village like Mount Sterling. In the winter it was dismal, but spring stirred the forest to fresh life and dressed the fields in shimmering green. Elizabeth planted flowers on the sunny side of the gaunt old house. Tom mowed the high grass with a scythe. It was a home.

This old place, so typical of pioneer homesteads, seems now to be leaning heavily to the sunless side like a very old woman who hates to be gazed at with pity. It was tenantless for forty years and nearly fell to pieces. Even for an imaginative mind it is difficult to see the Mason children in their billowy, wide-hemmed dresses playing in that grim old doorway; to conjure up visions of young Tom in tight gray breeches and top boots lustily swinging a scythe while Elizabeth carefully pruned flowers that have left no trace of their loveliness.

Before John T. bought it, the house was known as the "Davis place". Today what's left of it is still known as the "Davis place"; the Mason ownership is just a forgotten incident in its long and lonely past. Two stories high, made of the tiny little brick of colonial times, it reared its severe façade in a frown of stern disapproval at the pleasant rolling foothills around it. One end of the house is completely blank; just a cliff of brick rising at a steep angle to meet a towering chimney. There was another chimney at the other end of the

house to balance it. The front door was just a door, unrelieved by porch, architected entrance or graceful iron handrails. It opened, and defied one to go in.

Windows, half big enough, march stolidly across the front of the house. Fifty or sixty feet away there is a tumble-down picket fence which might have been there in Tom's time; nobody knows. The place has that dead look of an eroded gravestone in a forgotten cemetery. If Elizabeth ever made that place gay and cheery and bright with spring flowers, as Emily says, she was indeed a remarkable woman.

In the spring of 1829 there was little to do but read the *Lexington Gazette*, a week old, and little to talk of but Andrew Jackson and his smashing success in the national election of the preceding fall. After the votes were in and the result was known, John T.'s lined face relaxed. It was good to talk again of familiar things; good to see one man's dreams, at any rate, coming true. Jackson was a name shining over Kentucky like a flaming meteor. Jackson was to be the next President. Already, said the *Gazette*, he had honored their distinguished fellow citizen, William T. Barry, with a cabinet appointment. Barry was going to Washington as Postmaster General; first man in the country's history to hold cabinet rank as head of the Post Office Department.

John T. was glad for Barry's sake; Tom was glad, too. It meant that he wouldn't see his cousin John Barry, his father's namesake, for a long time, but that was to be expected. The Masons were proud of the Barrys.

Barry was the Democratic boss of Kentucky during the national campaign and the appointment was a plain gesture of gratitude for services rendered. Tom understood that. He knew that Barry had been disgusted at Clay's treatment of Jackson in 1824; he saw Clay reaching out a long and powerful hand in 1828 to steer the State away from Jackson. Barry's somewhat novel method of carrying the State for Jackson was successful. He ran for governor of Kentucky on the Democratic ticket and in that capacity built up a political machine that rolled ponderously across the prostrate bodies of the Clay

henchmen. He organized every county; he stumped the State from the Ohio River to Tennessee. Clay himself was on the platforms, debating against him, fighting desperately to keep the Jackson vote down.

Clay, said Barry, "used the most disgraceful language against Jackson, belittling his every achievement and overlooking no opportunity to place Jackson in the position of a militaristic seeker after power." This is the campaign that flooded Kentucky with handbills scattered broadside by Clay and the Whigs. "Coffin Handbills", they were called, with heavy black coffin-shaped borders containing accounts of the men Jackson was accused of murdering in duels. Clay seriously accused Jackson in a speech at Louisville of "murdering in cold blood thousands of British citizens, whose only crime was their desire to spend Christmas Eve in New Orleans". Clay was the master orator of the age. Barry, a mild, amiable man with a ready grin and no great ability as an orator himself, was at a loss.

Barry beat him in one way, and was defeated in another. He carried the State triumphantly for Jackson, but lost the governorship to a Whig. Thereupon Andrew Jackson appointed him to a new cabinet post.

At Mount Sterling these stirring deeds were just surly little items in a weekly newspaper to the Masons. They could not take any part in the campaign. John T. was burying his eighth daughter and twelfth child about the time Andy's cohorts streamed to the polls. There is no record that John T. even cast a vote in the election.

Emily, bless her filing-case memory, has given us a few gentle hints of that awful winter. Even she is constrained to skip over the worst parts. She reports in a rather matter-of-fact manner that her mother's health was failing; that Grandmother Moir huddled in the chimney corner all winter, that Tom was the only lively figure in the family.

Tom went out determined to find some way to help, and he came back the proud possessor of a job in a Mount Sterling grocery and general merchandise store. There were only a

few stores of any kind in the village; this was the largest. Emily doesn't say what salary the young Adonis earned, but he must have received some cash because he gave pennies to his sisters. They promptly ran down the road to the same store and bought candy, so the proprietor regarded him as an asset.

He got vegetables, flour, lard, bacon and occasionally fresh meat. He opened the store every morning, sweeping out with a broom made of aromatic pine shoots. He weighed out sugar; he bent his back and grew strong lifting barrels and crates. Little by little, as spring warmed into summer, Tom's narrow shoulders grew wider and muscles of steel strained at his small sleeves.

In his own writings he never referred to this experience. Neither did John T. Bending and lifting heavy merchandise in this general store was a sort of graduate course in human relations for him. Until he first went to work there his outstanding characteristic had been a smooth, frail figure which gave rise to legends about his delicate ways. Never afterward did anyone dare call him unmannerly names. The general store finished a lesson begun in the private school in Lexington. He learned how a man feels to fall from wealth and respect to the drudgery of a servant; how it feels to be ordered brusquely around by an illiterate; the cancerous pain of knowing that his only value to himself or the world is the feeble work he can do with his hands. If he suffered, he suffered in silence.

Mount Sterling housewives, bonneted and shawled matrons we seem to see clearly now, probably made life miserable for him. He thought of his uncle Barry, a Cabinet officer; of Jackson fondly calling him "my son"; of Clay and Monroe discussing with him weighty matters of national import. Then there would be a growl from some big-booted, flat-hatted farmer with tobacco juice in his beard: "Here, you! Lift that bar'l on my wagon, boy, and be quick about it!"

With the springiness of youth he grew to like it. Emily says he would come home at night whistling. Once or twice he experimented with the long rat-tail cheroots tied in fly-specked bundles in the cigar case. He filled out fast; his thin body de-

veloped a little more. In 1835 when he was a hero and applauded on the streets of Detroit, an artist who had never seen him before made a sketch of him in a barber shop just because he was handsome and had such a well-developed chest. Tom could thank the grocer for the chest, at least.

The store was open until late at night, but the proprietor usually let him off early. He walked the two miles home, flung his homespun jacket across a chair, took a flickering tallow candle and sat down at a table. In the dim yellow light, wavering and dancing before his eyes, he studied. He kept up his classwork as carefully as if he had to recite all those lessons next day. He wrote comments in the margins of his father's and grandfather's works on philosophy. They are preserved to this day, and readable. One says: "This is silly!" The passage, in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is the famous dictum holding that any nation's economic resources can be exceeded by the spending of tyrants.

Emily was studying with him. Nobody forced them to study. They felt a strange thirst for every available drop of knowledge they could squeeze from the family library. Without schools, without parental stimulus, without the wearisome routine of classrooms every day, these two somehow realized that in education lay their hope of escaping from this environment. They could not have explained it that way themselves.

Far downstate young Lincoln had begun forming letters in charcoal on a coal shovel. When he was about fifteen and living in Illinois he borrowed Parson Weems' story of Washington; read it, used it to chink up the wall of their rude cabin when the storms came. He had to work with his hands to earn money to buy another copy to replace it. Nobody spurred him to study. He felt the same craving for knowledge.

Tom succeeded better than Emily in wrecking the fine old books in the family library. Lacking much paper to write on, he scribbled comments all over the margins of books and wrote detailed reviews of some passages that interested him. He was cramming. Opportunity was coming.

In the spring there was a letter. John T., stooped and wrinkled, had aged thirty years. Elizabeth, after twelve children, would have been unrecognizable to her girlhood friends at Williamsburg. Tom was working at the store; at home were four little girls to play in the yard. When the letter came, John T. realized with a sense of humiliation how far he had fallen since his prosperous days at "Serenity Hall".

William T. Barry was in Washington. Jobs were being handed out. He was going to make an effort to secure one for John T. A political job, with a salary. To the proud Masons it was a far cry from the statesman, the judge, the Senator, who served their State from a sense of public obligation. A political job, with a salary.

At "Moirfield", John T. would have torn up such an offer with contempt. At "Serenity Hall" he would have laughed uproariously, slapped his thigh, rolled up the letter and lighted a Virginia cigar with it. At Mount Sterling he held it in trembling hands, and blinked.

There would be more details. After the inauguration he'd know what Barry could do. He would wait. He could do nothing else.

2

The hilarious inauguration of Andrew Jackson at Washington City on March 4, 1829, was one of those spectacles which had to be played down and quietly hushed in the history books. Rheumy-eyed, irritable old John Quincy Adams was so infuriated that he refused to ride to the Capitol in the same coach with his victorious successor. John C. Calhoun made up his mind then and there to resign the office of Vice-President, although he could have held it longer, and became the first and only Vice-President to do so. Members of Congress had to be there but they hurried their families out of town like refugees.

For a month before the event there had been a quiet,

sinister invasion of Washington City. From Tennessee and Louisiana and Carolina and all the backwoods regions came moccasined, coonskin-capped wild men, dirty as dogs, carrying flintlock rifles and powder horns. Delegations of limping army veterans were trooping the muddy streets; backwoods lawyers in tall hats, city politicians with tobacco-stained whiskers, Indians, reprobates, swindlers. An eyewitness wrote that the whole of the hinterland had spilled over its scum into Washington. Jackson's biographer, Parton, says that there were four thousand of these characters in town; other estimates vary.

Most of them were there with only one idea—jobs! Spoils! Some of the woodsmen had come to attend a sort of national hoe-down: the Great Day, the triumph of a common man. Calhoun appealed to a mob of them for quiet around the Capitol. He very bitterly shouted that Andy Jackson was the most illiterate man who ever aspired to the office of President. The crowd cheered. They liked to hear it.

Jackson had arrived in February and was staying at the "Wigwam", a private boardinghouse. Major Eaton, Jackson's Secretary of War, was there; Jackson's nephew, Major Andrew Jackson Donelson, was there. So was Peggy Eaton; none of them seemed to be able to keep a procession of noisy job-hunters out of the front hall. Jackson was sick in body, mind and soul; sick over the sudden death of his beloved wife Rachel; sick over the prospect of a big White House reception without her; groaning over the impending inauguration as an anticlimax; something he didn't want at all. He was sick of raucous-voiced beggars stretching out skinny hands for jobs. He wrote his inaugural address in this vein, and it reads like it.

There was a thick ship's cable stretched across the front steps of the Capitol part way up to keep the crowd back. The mob was orderly until after the oath of office had been administered. Then pandemonium broke loose and continued for three days.

When Jackson stepped forward and began reading his address, nobody heard a word he said. His voice was low-pitched

and rough. The crowd was straining at the cable and wrestling with the bodyguard to get close enough to the hero to shake his hand. When he bowed and retired, the shouting crowd shot off squirrel rifles, leaped and whooped like Indians. Jackson was guided to a carriage, alone, and the driver set off for the White House at a brisk trot. The mob followed.

At the White House the mob poured in past the door guards and tried to follow Jackson from room to room. Servants tried to decoy the bulk of them outside by setting up great bowls of punch and other refreshments on the lawn. There was such a press of bodies inside that the draperies were pulled down, holes gashed in the East Room rug and chairs ruined from hobnailed boots and spurs of uncouth yokels who stood on them to see over the heads of the crowd. At sundown the guards had the doors protected but some ingenious wag had found a window open on the first floor and had put a couple of planks up to the sill. More shouting men crowded inside over this improvised ramp.

This episode keynoted Jackson's administration better than anything he could have said in his address although he was very specific therein. The survivors of the White House soiree read his address in the newspaper next day. They saw that he had declared firmly that he could not trust any incumbent officeholder; that he knew they were all antagonistic toward him and his administration; that they would sabotage whatever they could. He said he would exercise his power of removal. He did.

From that moment not one appointive job was safe. Jackson quickly began carving up the nation to feast his friends. In his first month in office he removed more officials than all his predecessors combined from the day of Washington's first inauguration.

Jackson's biographers say that the sun had not gone down on that inaugural before it was known in official Washington that Jackson would immediately remove from office every official who had opposed him in the election and appoint everybody who had helped him. Statistics on the mass slaughter are

unimportant, and have been in dispute ever since. The New York *American* declared in 1830 that two thousand were removed the first year. Major Eaton said that the number was six hundred and ninety. Somewhere between these two extremes lies Jackson's toll in 1829.

Washington, during his first term as President, refused to appoint a friend merely because he was a friend. "You are welcome to my house; you are welcome to my heart. But you are not a man of business and your opponent is a man of business. My personal feelings have nothing to do with the present case. I am not George Washington, but President of the United States. As George Washington, I would do anything in my power for you. As President, I can do nothing."

During his two administrations he removed only nine office-holders. Six of them were deputy collectors of customs. One was a surveyor, one a vice-consul and one a minister to a foreign country, Pinckney, who was thoroughly disliked in Paris. Every dismissal was for cause, not politics.

Adams removed nine, all for malfeasance. Jefferson removed thirty-nine, but he had a minor rebellion on his hands which accounted for it. He declared in a Congressional message that not one removal was the result of a difference in political opinions. Jefferson refused to appoint any of his relatives, for fear his motive would be misunderstood. James Madison made only five removals; James Monroe, nine; John Quincy Adams, two. The permanency of a Federal appointment was so well-established in Monroe's administration that when the Fourth Auditorship of the Treasury fell vacant there were, among others, five United States Senators and thirty Representatives clamoring for it.

Official heads fell faster in Washington, during Jackson's first six months, than in Paris in the days of Marat. A Washington paper, dated in July, 1829, complained that construction on half-built houses was at a standstill; merchants could neither sell their goods nor collect their accounts; the city had an air of tenseness like that of a place under siege waiting for the enemy to smash through the gates.

Dismissals were cruelly sudden, usually unexplained. Major Eaton was Secretary of War. He stalked into the Chief Clerk's office and said: "Look here. There ought to be perfect cooperation between a Secretary and a Chief Clerk. I have no loyalty from you; I know that. So I have appointed Doctor Randolph, of Virginia, to replace you. Good day, sir."

The Bureau of Indian Affairs was Eaton's most technical staff department. For many years it had been adroitly handled by a renowned expert on Indian affairs, Colonel McKenney. One morning a disdainful youth walked in and spent some time gazing at the portraits of powerful Indian chiefs which hung on the walls of the outer office. He looked at the peace pipes and other exhibits in the glass cases. Then he came to the Colonel's desk and said he didn't think he'd like the office after all.

"What office?" demanded the Colonel.

"This office," answered the youth. "I was appointed to your post this morning by Major Eaton." He exhibited his letter of appointment. There had been no notice to McKenney. Furthermore, McKenney was an officer whose whole loyalty was given to his job. He had no political thoughts on any subject. But the letter was no surprise. It was a relief.

"Take it, my dear sir," McKenney sighed. "Take the post. The sword of Damocles has been hanging over my head long enough."

"No," yawned the youth, languidly. "I prefer an auditor's office where I can fill out forms." He told McKenney that the grizzled old Colonel could have the office back. After stuffing the letter in the wastebasket the visitor returned to the President for a transfer. McKenney never learned his name, but found that he had presented a pair of silver pistols to the President, once carried by Washington.

Until the spoils system swept in with Jackson, there had been a tradition of culture, and of ability, hovering over public service. Public life was a profession like any other, and it required a long apprenticeship before ability was recognized. The ruling class was composed mainly of college men like the

Adams family, Jefferson, Monroe, the Masons of Virginia, men who knew the disastrous lessons of history.

"The nation," mourned a Philadelphia newspaper, "has always been served, and served ably, by its élite. It is now being mangled by its refuse." Even Clay, from sour retirement at "Ashland", wrote that the fact of a man's holding office under Jackson's administration was *prima-facie* evidence that he was one of three types: an adventurer, an incompetent or a scoundrel.

Opinions differ, but I believe Barry began dickering for a job for John T. Mason in June, 1829, and kept at it until the following spring.

Hemans says John T. "either sought or had offered to him" a political post at that time. The distinction is academic, a titbit for the delectation of scholars and librarians. The fact is that John T. began perking up and regaining some of his old verve as soon as this prospect dawned.

Barry knew all about John T.'s manifold misfortunes, and he occupied a rather exceptional position in the Cabinet which made a request from the Postmaster General very difficult to ignore. He and Catherine Mason Barry were Jackson's benefactors, many a time. Even a century cannot stamp out the memories of Jackson's cabinet troubles early in his administration. Major Eaton started Washington gossips on the first of all Washington merry-go-rounds when he married a flip young widow, daughter of the "Wigwam's" proprietor and recent widow of a paymaster in the navy. Her name was Peggy O'Neil. As Mrs. Eaton she was a Cabinet wife. Immediately Mrs. Branch, Mrs. Ingham, Mrs. Berrien and almost everybody but Mrs. Barry marched on the White House to protest against receiving such a creature socially as an equal. Catherine Mason Barry was a great lady. She was, furthermore, a Mason of Virginia. Her social position was so secure that she could well afford to ignore the others and keep herself thoroughly clear of *l'affaire Peggy*. She received Peggy at her home and

she was the intermediary who finally restored peace in the official family.

Jackson almost wept on Mrs. Barry's neck in gratitude. Her husband rubbed his hands in glee. He waited for *l'affaire Peggy* to run its ridiculous course. When it was graciously settled, and Jackson was deeply grateful, the wily Postmaster General mentioned John T.

Barry was never a statesman, but he had few equals as a practical politician. He elbowed the President out of direct control of the Eaton situation and it became so desperate that it very nearly led to a majority of Cabinet resignations. At the proper time he stepped in and took the bows, and presented his bill. The whole strategy was a build-up to get the President into the proper frame of mind for appointing John T. to a major political post. If John T. had mounted a horse and hurried straight to Washington during the summer of 1829 he would have been competing for meagre handouts against the riffraff of the nation. When that problem was gradually lessened, and Jackson's Cabinet fight was over, Barry could corner Jackson and gain his consent. What Barry really wanted was a Territorial Governorship for John T. He couldn't have that. Every such executive post had its rightful claimant: men who had accomplished as much for the Jackson cause as Barry.

John T. had done nothing in the campaign. Gaining an outstanding administrative job for such a man amounted to a minor miracle.

Barry couldn't say, in the fall of 1829, just what he could do for John T. Suddenly a vicious winter fell like a blow. Mountain trails were impassable. Barry could keep the bill unpaid until spring.

As soon as the March floods had cleared the trails, John T. began preparations. Tom was going, too. Both needed new clothes, new horses, time to prepare for a White House conference. Accident postponed the necessity for speed. The accident unluckily befell Jackson, and it happened in the self-same "Wigwam" which had brought down so much trouble upon him.

In April, Jackson began feeling a return of the dizziness which was one of the reminders of his Florida campaign. One evening after he had appeared at a public dinner in Washington, a flock of noisy office seekers followed him home. He was on foot; he hurried around a block and tried to gain the sanctuary of the "Wigwam" instead of the White House because it was closer. He arrived out of breath with the howling crowd almost at his heels. Major Donelson slammed the front door and Jackson wearily began climbing the stairs to his old room. At the topmost stair the stairway was dark; Jackson instinctively felt with his foot for another step and tripped. He fell headlong down the stairs.

During the fall he suffered a double hernia. Many years before he had fought a pistol duel with a fiery Southerner named Dickinson, and a pistol ball had ripped his abdominal wall from side to side. Clumsy surgical stitching had left an insecure peritoneum. It ruptured horribly, spilling the old man's intestine out on the floor. Surgeons sewed it up again and Jackson was in bed only three weeks. But he never was well again. Pain and frequent bedridden convalescences followed him to the end of his days.

3

Young Stevens Thomson Mason, eighteen years old and swinging a manly pair of arms, gazed serenely from the Barry doorway at Washington City. He had a new coat, a silk hat nearly two feet high and a shirt with a ruffled front. His boots were polished every day by the Barry house slaves. With care he arrayed himself to the last detail, smoothed the wrinkles out of his satin vest, pulled down his coat in the front and gave his hat a quick pat to the correct rakish angle. Thrusting a lace handkerchief nonchalantly into his cuff, he took a walking stick from the bowing slave, stalked out of the Barry door and headed for the shopping section.

John T. was closeted in nervous conference with Barry most of the time. The President was very difficult to see. He was

back at his desk, but irritable to an astonishing degree. Scores of people were trying to get past Major Donelson, who acted as secretary, into his office. They were being turned away. The White House was a place of mystery. Jackson was trying to keep the seriousness of his injury a secret.

Finally there was a note, delivered to Barry's office by messenger. The President, wrote Major Donelson, would see Barry and John T. Mason at two P. M., May 18, 1830. No record of the interview was kept. Colonel McKenney, still the famous chief of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was outside in Donelson's office while Barry, together with John T. and Tom, were in conference with the President. He wrote in his memoirs that when they had left he found Jackson writing busily at his desk, spectacles on his nose, blunt and impersonal in manner as if he were trying to write down something before he forgot it.

Some weeks before, another bureau chief had told Colonel McKenney that he had better make some appointment and see the President in order to clear the prevailing impression that he was disloyal. He wrote that he had just entered when he perceived that the President was busy, and started to leave.

Jackson looked up over the top of his spectacles and said: "Come in, sir, come in."

"You are engaged, sir?" asked McKenney.

"No more so than I always am, and always expect to be," sighed Jackson, drawing a long breath and giving signs of "great uneasiness".

The uneasiness was obviously an abdominal cramp, coupled with the sudden realization that Barry had put something over on him. Jackson had forgotten about John T. Mason as soon as he had left "Serenity Hall" eleven years before. To the President he was just another office seeker without any proof of service to offer; nothing whatever to recommend him except Barry. Barry usually was devious about coming to the point, and poor old Andy Jackson, suffering with a sore abdomen, no doubt thought at the beginning of the visit that it was purely social.

When the conference got down to the point of the visit and Jackson discovered what Barry really wanted, he must have been at a loss. Hastily he thumbed through reports of jobs held by Whigs—deputy collectorships, marshals' badges, clerkships. Barry was contemptuous. It would have to be better than that. What, then? A foreign ministry? No, too expensive to maintain. The salary was the chief factor—a job with a fat salary. A Territorial Secretaryship.

Scant wonder that the President felt "great uneasiness". John T. did not rank high enough by several thousand votes for a post of that magnitude. He couldn't say no, bluntly. He was a fool to grant it. A Secretaryship was craftily pushed at Jackson with a demand for appointment. It was only slightly lower in magnitude than a Governorship, and because a Secretary was an acting Governor in the Governor's absence it paid almost the same salary. Territorial Secretaries ranked on an equal plane with Bureau Chiefs and Assistant Secretaries of Federal Departments. Definitely no job for a political nobody. Yet here was Barry demanding it.

Wearily he ran his finger down a list of entries. The finger stopped.

"Now here's a situation in Michigan Territory. Do you know Lewis Cass, sir? A remarkable man, a fighter. He's a coming man. He's the Governor of the Territory. A good Democrat, as well. The Secretaryship is held by a Whig named Witherell. He must be removed, of course. Have you ever been in Michigan, Mr. Mason?"

"No, sir."

"Fine. You're appointed."

When it was over, Jackson probably wondered how it had happened.

The post paid twelve hundred a year, a tidy sum for a frontier town like Detroit. It was a comfortable living for those days. John T. breathed easier. When Colonel McKenney came in and saw Jackson writing, he probably saw the President writing an order to the Secretary of State to prepare the commission for his signature. Nothing else would explain the speed

with which such an important post was disposed of. Congress was adjourned at this date; it would meet again in the fall and John T. would be forced to hurdle the high fence of Congressional confirmation. Until that time, he was safe.

There were fees, travelling expenses, other "forms of emolument" as the Treasury Circular described the frequent outside sources of income which Secretaries liked so well. One of them was simultaneously a Territorial Secretary at twelve hundred a year and Collector of the Port at a thousand more; he was also an attorney and practiced law on the side. In another Territory at this time, a Secretary acted as his own Supreme Court justice and collected two salaries. Others made money in other ways.

One of John T.'s most welcome introductions into the service of his country was a voucher for travelling expenses to Detroit for Tom and himself. There was a one-paragraph notice in the Washington newspaper which listed five appointments made that same week; John T.'s name led all the rest. Such was the confusion in Washington City that nobody paid any particular attention either to John T. or to his new position. But, on the same day the notice appeared in the newspaper, some unknown citizen of Michigan read it and hurried back to Detroit as fast as possible.

John T. could not leave immediately. He had to learn just what the Department of State expected from him in the way of reports. He talked with officials who knew Michigan Territory, as to ways of life there. He gazed in awe at great maps, and saw Michigan Territory stretching far across the present Middle West, including both the modern States of Michigan and Wisconsin and part of Iowa. He learned what he could about it from the viewpoint of Washington bureaucrats. It was little enough.

Colonel McKenney had been there. He knew Cass; he admired him deeply.

He told tales of Pontiac and his men; of the treachery of all Indians and of Tecumseh in particular. He swept his arms in eloquent gestures. John T. saw swift-running rivers cutting

murmuring trails through the forests of oak and tamarack. He saw Hurons and Pottawatomis lurking behind every tree. McKenney nonchalantly went into detail about Cass's bravery in going alone and unguarded into the depths of this primeval forest to consult with the suspicious chiefs.

John T. did not care for such graphic description. This reckless sort of life was just what he had craved while he was living in the luxury of "Moirfield". He had whiled away those summers dreaming of adventure in the wilds. He had pictured himself, to himself, as a great civilized and trail blazer. But McKenney rather deflated the image of himself that he had built up. When John T. heard the details of how Cass had to travel in the woods, he wanted to change the subject. Cass was presiding over a council fire at the headwaters of Saginaw Bay at that moment. Chiefs of seven tribes sat stolidly around the fire, beady eyes fixed on Cass's flabby jowls. Cass was selling them a bill of goods, persuading them to surrender their tribal claims to more Michigan territory. He offered practically nothing in return. John T. wondered how a man could have that much nerve.

He set off for Detroit in an apprehensive frame of mind. There were good-byes, affectionate hugs, handshakes and mutual congratulations. John T. was grateful; the Barrys were delighted. John T.'s new horsehair trunk was packed and Stevens Thomson Mason, his ruffled shirts carefully stowed away, doffed his top hat with an exaggerated gesture. Confidently the pair embarked on their exhausting journey.

In 1830, Detroit was as far from Washington City, in point of time as South Africa is now. Washington to Baltimore was a dusty ride in an oscillating baby carriage of a stagecoach; all day as fast as horses could trot over the busy road. Baltimore to Philadelphia was a little longer and a great deal rougher. There were more frequent changes of horses, and slower times made. Philadelphia to New York, the busiest highway in the new nation, was a succession of inns, frequent stops, long delays. In those days, operators of stagecoach lines were in the midst of a price war. The threat of the rail-

road was frightening them all. Canal boats made the entire journey at a fare even lower than that in the stages. Stagecoach operators also owned the wayside inns, and they had been forced to cut the through fare to a point where it represented a loss to them. So they made it up by stopping the coaches often enough for the passengers to visit the taprooms at each of their inns. The profit on the rum and whiskey balanced the loss on the stage lines.

The usual stagecoach time for the ninety-four-mile highway journey was four days. A coach that made it in three days was known as the "flying machine". Packet boats from Philadelphia, down the bay and up the Jersey coast, could equal that time for distance more than twice as long. Some years later, this exorbitant stagecoach time and the efforts of operators to get the passengers drunk en route was one of the chief arguments used for projecting the railroad. The Masons found out why a railroad would have to come. It was a great lesson to young Tom.

At New York, there was a rest of a day or so to remove the stains of travel and recover from the characteristic headache engendered by a long stagecoach journey. There was time for Tom to gaze at the hordes of immigrants arriving in bedraggled square-rigged ships at Castle Garden. There was time for him to saunter up and down the stone-paved sidewalks and admire the merchandise on display in Whitehall windows. It was his first visit to New York; it was the metropolis of the country and Tom, for some reason, always fancied himself as an expatriate New Yorker ever afterward. In Michigan he committed the political blunder of having all his clothes tailored in Manhattan; of sending to stores on Spring Street or Maiden Lane for articles which the outraged Detroit merchants were keeping in stock to tempt him. He seemed to know everyone of prominence in New York and nobody of prominence in Detroit. That, too, had its aftermath and helped to shape his subsequent career.

Perhaps New York looked like heaven to him after the mud and poverty of Washington City. At any rate, it was the start-

ing point of one of the most delightful experiences of his life, the magnificent voyage up the palisaded Hudson. In 1830, day-line boats paddled serenely up the river just as they do now. A little longer, perhaps; Tom Mason had fourteen hours to contemplate the ever-changing beauties of the scene. But the boats would have surprised moderns who like to think of 1830 as a primitive period. They were ornately scrolled in white and gold; they offered singers and instrumentalists to serenade the passengers and their ladies, and they sold all the latest mixed drinks in their spacious bars. The fare, according to the handbills of the period, was ten dollars. That included meals, but for an extra two and a half dollars there was a "first-class sleeping accommodation" in one of the cabin staterooms.

Teeming Albany was the crossroads of the old colonial empire. There, amid shouting mobs of "pullers", the Masons threaded their way to the famous little gilt-scrolled sign on the quay that read: "Erie Canal Company. Passengers Inquire Here."

It was a long way around. On the map, it appears as if the Masons were purposely going as far out of a direct line as they could. The casual traveller of today can leave Washington by bus, train, airplane or motor car and take a straight-line route to Detroit that is not as far as from Washington to Albany. In 1830, the traveller could have done the same. But instead of the luxury of the elegantly adorned Hudson steamboats, he could have rolled his bedding and started on horseback. There was no other comfortable way to reach Detroit. It was a choice of horseback over the mountains and through the swamps, or the lazy comfort of the river and canal.

Five days from Albany to Buffalo was considered good running time. The passenger barges always had right-of-way over the freight scows. At Lockport, where the great 110-foot locks raised the passengers fifty-four feet in five stages, sometimes the freighters would have to wait three hours to let through-passenger-traffic pass. The passengers rode in barges that looked not unlike the lowly freight scows; blunt-ended, squat,

perhaps a little trimmer with their green window blinds and white paint.

In the one-room cabin there was a simple curtain stretched across the space, amidships. At night all the men slept on one side, the ladies on the other. Of course the curtain wasn't soundproof, and they could hear each other's snores all night. They didn't have beds. But they did boast thick mattresses, laid on the floor, which they scrupulously rolled up and stowed away in lockers in the morning. Most of the day, weather permitting, they sat on folding chairs placed for their convenience topside, pointing with gold-headed canes at the items of interest which slipped so slowly past. About once an hour, inevitably as the barge ground around a sharp turn, there'd be a mad scramble for safety on the deck. "Low bridge!" bellowed from a tiller sent many a stiff old dowager flat on her face in a great, undignified hurry.

This was travel luxury in 1830. There was such a volume of it that three years before the canal directors had segregated passenger traffic into rigid classes, as on ocean ships. There were wealthy tourists by the thousands, from New England and the plantations of the South. The Erie Canal and the steamers on the Lakes immediately opened to them a great dark continent, hitherto the especial province of the soldier and the scout. It became fashionable later to make the entire journey to Chicago; lecturers got bookings merely because they had been there. Chicago, at the time, was an Indian village of about two or three hundred assorted half-breeds nestling around a swampy river and a burned old fort. But it was the terminus of civilization's transport. Steamboats went there, on supposedly regular schedules. Tourist cruises to Patagonia, in the same period of the succeeding century certainly aroused no such vibrant, breathless feeling of adventure as the great Chicago voyage by canal and steamboat. It was one of life's rare gems.

Tourists with money went first-class. Commercial people to whom time was valuable and comfort essential always paid the premium rate, too. But there was a sort of steerage, a low-rate

emigrant class that crowded the Erie's narrow waterway for forty years. As soon as the Erie opened in 1825, the wave of pioneers responded. By the year 1830 it was approaching high tide. We have figures in existence today to show the traffic on the canal month by month throughout its existence. Four thousand farmer families passed through the canal in July, 1830, at the same time the Masons were making their journey. They were all westbound in tightly jammed discomfort in the ordinary freight scows. "Flour, wool and hides eastbound; farmers westbound" said the boater's manifest.

Four thousand of them to crowd the tiny decks of the Erie steamboats, and four thousand more to join the creaking, endless procession of ox-team trains entering Detroit from New York and New England by way of Canada. As long as the canal and the lake were open to navigation, they'd pour their eager throngs in never-ending floods—to Detroit!

On the lake, during the tedious four-day voyage from Buffalo, young Tom must have had plenty of opportunity to talk to these hard-mouthed folk and hear their stories. He and his father were assigned to comfortable cabins, but the farmers slept on their own piles of bags and bundles on the deck. Their stories were all alike; a saga that he was destined to hear repeated thousands of times during the ensuing years. "We weren't doing so good down home on the farm. We hear there's land out here—good land. They say a man can git a quarter-section fer the askin'."

It was a mass migration unlike anything he had ever seen. White-thatched John T., who had sat in front of his law office and watched caravans of Virginians plodding toward Kentucky, was profoundly impressed. The pioneering and settlement of Kentucky went on slowly for more than thirty years. This was different. This was a sort of fire hose, aimed at Michigan and plunging people into its primitive interior under pressure of some new, some utterly unknown driving force. The Erie Canal, most expensive public improvement in the United States, paid for its entire cost within ten years and made a prodigious profit. The traffic on Lake Erie was so unprece-

dented that by the year 1819 there were four steamboats operating; by 1825 there were seventeen, and in 1830 there were more than thirty. These companies formed a protective association in 1827 to keep the fares up. They succeeded very well.

The Middle West, all of five present states, was settled and organized into counties and townships within a decade. This has been called the swiftest mass movement of a country's population in the history of the world. Undoubtedly it was, until the day of the dictators.

Tom was not perceptive enough to see the social implications of such a prodigious wave of migration. Both he and John T. saw it instantly as most mortals would—as a gold mine for Detroit. That little hamlet, they knew, was the only supply center in the region. All these caravans, and the boatloads of weary farmers; every plodding, complaining ox-team wagon, had to come to Detroit. John T. was overeager to see the place.

At dawn, July 8, 1830, Tom threaded his way over the crowded deck to gaze at a new world. There, stretching low and limitless before him, lay the Michigan shore. The vibrating steamboat was pushing hard under a full head of steam against a vicious current. That would be, he thought, the mouth of the Detroit River.

Low land, and marshy, a tangle of tamarack and pine, confronted him. They were dwarf trees, not the tall pines of Kentucky. There were clouds of buzzing insects. As the boat struggled upstream against the current he saw a sandy island hugging the Michigan shore, a very long island. Out of a white-washed shack in a disreputable state of neglect came a scrubby peasant, to laugh up at the towering deck and shout gibberish in an unknown tongue. He waved, and the boat's whistle gave a disdainful toot. Then he had glided astern. Far up toward the northern tip of the island there was a lattice windmill, which to Tom looked like some pictures he had seen of Holland.

Caught in midstream, the boat chuffed and puffed valiantly. Tom could see the foaming wheels gaining, foot by foot. He looked ahead, at the placid expanse of bright river marching

straight into the horizon. John T., white hair blowing in the stiff breeze, was beside him. They involuntarily watched the shore.

Flat as a billiard table, the land held itself aloof from the river on a sharp cliff. A wagon road, straight as two taut strings, dwindled together in the distance. On the road was a two-wheeled pony cart, the wheels outrageously thick and heavy, the pony disgustingly small. It bore no resemblance to any vehicle they had ever seen.

The very atmosphere reeked of strangeness. The boat was a little haven of civilization in a sea of unfamiliar things. Fishing boats, queer-looking canoes with triangular sails all patched and dyed in violent colors, looked like something painted in a picture. Swarthy men in round black woolen caps hauled in their nets rhythmically, paying no attention to the boat. There were more of those pony carts on the road. Up ahead, the road disappeared into a clump of trees.

There were twin steeples, holding up their gold crosses in pride, just seen above the treetops. The sun caught and illumined a little rounded dome, gilded and glowing like gold in the morning sun. They saw a stub of wharf.

Presently the throbbing boat stretched out the grove of trees, and there was Detroit. It was so abrupt as to be like a conjurer's trick; a village that somebody had pulled out of a hat. One moment there was the road, pointing straight ahead to a swaying clump of trees. The next moment they were opposite a magic town, a town that had suddenly appeared there.

At the boat's bow, a sailor fired a salute gun that echoed and re-echoed among Detroit's handful of roofs. Tom was mystified. From the boat's rail he could see both ends of the town, upstream and downstream. It was condensed into that little frontage as if forced together in a vise. The buildings huddled together in upright rows right to the city line, and there were cow pastures next door. It was amazing to him.

People were running down the slanting ramp of a street and out on the wharf. They waved. Answering waves came from the boat's rail. A bedlam of roared orders from the

bridge; clanging of bells below; backing and churning of frothy wheels. Slowly the boat swung in midstream, like some gaffed monster. A heaving line snaked out; a heavy hawser crawled behind it. There was a bump. Those on board flung out their arms to hold their balance. The hawsers coiled over capstans on the wharf, checking the boat's drift away from the landing. Gangplanks rumbled into position. The captain, mounting to his post on the paddle box, doffed his cap and bowed to the passengers. That gesture signified the official recognition of the known fact that the boat had arrived.

Tom and John T. looked apprehensively up the steep cobblestoned ramp. They saw a sign: "Thos. Palmer. Lumber." Just beyond was another: "American Hotel." They looked down at the shouting people on the wharf. No carriages to meet the boat; only a few huge-wheeled freight carts and a couple of little pony carts. Everybody was on foot; dark-skinned men in brightly colored trousers and striped shirts shouted greetings in French.

A few Americans in rusty stovepipe hats were gazing upward curiously at John T. They said nothing; no word of welcome. They just looked at him. News of his appointment had arrived before him.

4

Tom's first impression of Detroit was unpleasant.

He was a stranger in a foreign land, populated mostly by smelly French fishermen and tobacco-spitting, obscene backwoodsmen. Detroit was the residence of many persons of culture; Tom didn't meet them for a long time. The few white men who could talk intelligently were Whigs, and bitterly antagonistic. They regarded him as part of an invading army that had captured the city.

Merchants greeted their customers in French; drivers shouted at their shaggy little ponies in French; even the haughty Indians spoke French. Whitewashed, thatched cottages, each with a huge crucifix on a pole in front and a promi-

nent manure pile in the rear, shouted eloquently at him in French. On his first exploring saunter down Jefferson Street from the Mansion House, Tom stopped aghast. There right in the middle of the market square, he saw an ugly oaken whipping post silhouetted against the harsh summer sunset. He saw a leather-thonged knout hanging beside it, as a warning to evildoers.

The town was so compressed between its mysteriously narrow river boundaries that it was growing backward away from the river in a straight line. For a town that size, two thousand people, it was a madhouse of frenzied street crowds. All the stores and buildings seemed to be new. Yet he knew that Detroit was one of America's oldest inhabited places; at least a century and a half of recorded history before his time.

The laughing, chattering French habitants lived a jubilantly carefree life of their own, without disturbing the rest of the population. But Tom met more and more sober, whiskery old Whigs who seemed to think that Jackson's election tolled the knell of American liberty. They told him so at every opportunity; they predicted doom at his father's coming. Newspapers he picked up in the Mansion House parlor carried columns of the most insulting personal slander he had ever read. In a Detroit newspaper, a politician who had somehow gotten elected on the wrong ticket was a target for the most amazing vilification in newspaper annals. He was mildly referred to as a "black-hearted hypocrite; a knave who filches from the public purse; a pious outer shell". On more important occasions the editors would go into considerable detail about him. He became "that blood-soaked murderer"; "that unhung criminal." Tom winced.

Detroit at that time supported two weeklies: the *Northwest Journal* and the *Courier*. There was a third, the *Gazette*, which had gone up in flames after some firebug set a torch to its second-floor office just a few weeks before the Masons' arrival. Both of the survivors insulted each other and all the figures in public life. Horsewhipping the editors was part of any gentleman's code, a chore that had to be done occasionally.

Political figures and prominent citizens assaulted editors on the street with whips, in their own offices with clubs, upon a sudden encounter with a well-placed uppercut; the editor was expected to print a retraction. He seldom did.

Fuller, in his famous thesis, *Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan*, says that the temper of the time was ungracious to a startling degree, and "downright nasty" upon occasion. In such a dross-laden melting pot as lusty Detroit in 1830, there was neither opportunity nor incentive to be polite. It was a wild boom town as crazy as any Oklahoma oil metropolis later, and packed with the same frontier characters and customs.

Violence in thought matched violence in action. Tom Mason, faced with this riotous environment, couldn't assimilate it. One of the most pathetic passages he ever penned was a graphic account of the last public hanging in Detroit, on September 30th, which he had the misfortune to witness because he happened to be passing in the street when it took place.

He stood there, biting his lips and clenching his fists, just one more stovepipe hat in a forest of them. In the market square, an old French building in the middle of Woodward Avenue facing Jefferson, a three-cornered gibbet had been erected and a platform built. The victim, one Simmons, his arms lashed behind him, was marched up the steps to the platform and stood there guffawing down at the crowd, which roared at him good-naturedly. The crowd was in hysterics over the drunken antics of the Oakland County Scouts, who were supposed to provide the martial background on such occasions. They were garbed in stained blue shirts and tremendous stovepipe hats, tootling on fifes and whanging away at drums without any conception of what they were supposed to be playing. "Red-nosed and bleary-eyed," wrote Tom, "they made a sorry spectacle of themselves. I grant that everyone had a good time including the condemned man, who was still laughing when launched into eternity." To Tom Mason it was nauseating. He never forgot it.

He left Detroit the following day. After that spectacle he

craved clean air. He waited until his father's first quarterly pay check arrived, on October 1st, and left rapidly for Kentucky. Tom was suddenly not a youth any more, but a man. The change came about suddenly, not so much as a consequence of his environment but because he was saddled with the care of the Mason family.

John T. gave him only enough money to buy a horse and get the family to Detroit. Upon Tom's shoulders rested the task of collecting the delicate Mason brood and gathering up the family possessions. Upon him now, no longer upon his father, was the responsibility of conducting them in safety through four hundred and fifty miles of mountain and swamp. He was called upon to organize another of those Mason caravans and command it on the slow and hazardous journey northward.

To his credit, Tom performed very much better than John T. He lost no time in preliminary social observances. He rode southward, executed his mission and arrived back in Detroit with the family on October 29th. He had to fight a natural wilderness almost as difficult as the Cumberland mountains: the dreary succession of snake-infested swamps in southern Michigan. But the family journals contain no heart-piercing accounts of death and disaster such as had overtaken John T.

He made a map of his route as he rode southward, and found all the bad spots. He arranged, on the return journey, to pass those points in broad daylight. Hence the journey was a slow, but steady, chronicle of progress from one inn to another without undue delay.

He found the old brick house at Mount Sterling deserted. A few miles away at Owingsville he located his mother and the family at the home of Ambrose Dudley Mann, a young attorney who had once been a law student in John T.'s office at Lexington.

Where was Emily's facile pen that day? In all her writings, no more dramatic episode could have been entered than the impressions of the family on the day that young Tom Mason rode into Mann's dooryard. Did they see the thoroughgoing changes in him? Did he still seem like the grocer's clerk who

had left Mount Sterling six months before? Didn't anybody notice his resplendent new clothes?

Of this there is no record. Tom was moving at such a speed that they had scant opportunity to stand at a distance and appraise him. There were wagons to be bought; a carriage for mother and the girls; horses, harness, barrels; the old, old inventory that had become so painfully familiar to Tom's gray-ing mother. There was the shrill scolding of Granny Peg, babying Elizabeth Moir Mason as she always did. There was Emily, wrapping blankets around the frail Theodosia while old Peff complained and loitered and dodged the heavy work. There was chatter. "What's Detroit like? Did you see any Indians? Weren't you afraid? Does everybody live in log cabins and carry tomahawks in Michigan?"

At last the chests were loaded, the huge bedsteads carefully wrapped and the last crate of books was on the wagons. Granny Peg rode with Peff on one of them. Two new blacks were coming along as drivers. They had been legally freed in Kentucky, but they had to get to a free state somehow to enjoy their liberty. Old Grandmother Moir, toothless and fragile, wept quietly as she prepared to leave the body of her husband forever under the bluegrass. Tom lifted her bodily into the carriage with his mother and the girls. He looked along the line of wagons, and mounted his horse.

No backward looks now; no thoughts of the Mason dead lying peacefully in many a sad grave. Tom looked resolutely forward as he rode slowly through Mount Sterling for the last time. In the coach, his mother was silent. Into Lexington, past proud buildings John T. once owned. There was the Bank of the United States. There was no sound from within. Many of the busy people on these streets had once bowed low to young Tom as he rode his pony along them. They didn't recognize him now, nor did he turn his head. "Serenity Hall" and its gleaming lawns belonged back in another world. If Tom and his mother were remembering the rich mansion, neither spoke of it.

Northward, wagons bumping over the dusty road and the solemn chants of the blacks perched upon them. Northward,

facing an uncertainty in Detroit which irritated Tom more than he could express in words. But henceforth Detroit was to be the Mason home. Whatever happened, ignoring whatever disasters the fates held in store for him, Tom Mason did not look back at Kentucky. He hoped he never would have to set foot in Kentucky again.

CHAPTER IV

FAUNTLEROY OF THE FRONTIER

I

ON APRIL 26, 1830, an incendiary fire which was set in the office of the *Detroit Gazette* swept through an entire block of the city.

The *Gazette* was the official spokesman for the Democratic Party in the Territory of Michigan. Its destruction was known to have been engineered by the Whigs, but the name of the man who applied the torch remained a secret. John P. Sheldon, editor of the *Gazette*, had been clapped into jail the previous year by William Woodbridge after a series of articles had held up Woodbridge as a crook who tempered justice with favoritism. Woodbridge, the Whig boss of the Territory, never was connected officially with the fire but Democrats could not escape the inference.

As it roared westward on Jefferson Avenue, the fire consumed the residence of Mr. Thomas Palmer as well as his office, the store of Major Brooks, the residence of Judge McDonnell, the store of Mr. Griswold, the office of Dr. Clarke and his adjoining dwelling house, and was brought under control in the building on the corner of Jefferson and Shelby, occupied at the time by a Mr. John Smith.

Six months later there was a community squabble in progress over responsibility for this fire. If Tom Mason had taken time to read the newspapers after he arrived back in Detroit from Kentucky, he would have seen both sides of a controversy which had illustrated very well Detroit's amazing capacity for producing trouble. He would have read, in print, accusations and counterblasts which merely pointed up the temper of the times.

The fire of 1830 exemplified the great fiery personalities who

inspired it. The disaster seemed to the gentle Masons, as they walked past the ruins every day, typical of this wild town and the wild people who shot and horsewhipped each other; who burned their enemies' newspapers (incidentally levelling an entire block in the busiest downtown section), and hated each other with a viciousness that even appalling acts of violence could not quench.

The fire keynoted the whole town, from its stinking open sewer to its secretive, pompous political bosses. Violence of this kind was a natural accompaniment of a frontier people who were unrestrained by any noticeable legal authority. The kind of people who made up Detroit was seen any day on its streets, where the crowds always seemed in such a hurry that they appeared to be on the point of breaking into a gallop. Burly pedestrians elbowed each other off the narrow sidewalks into the bottomless mud of the streets, then fought about it in cursing anger while other people milled about the scene to prod them on.

Mrs. Elizabeth Moir Mason, forty-one and fragile, shuddered with the Virginian's distaste for all forms of rudeness. She warned the five Mason daughters not to venture very far from the safe confines of the Mansion House parlor. From Sunshine Sister Mary, aged two, to willowy Emily, fifteen, the girls meekly obeyed. They were frightened.

Tom Mason was out house hunting. His father had no time to find a place to live in. Obviously he had not been expecting the family for several weeks, and had made no provision for their place of residence. Tom knew that John T. was harassed and miserable, but he said nothing. John T. did not know how to be acting governor; he was just a juicy Democratic lamb being led to a Whig barbecue.

Governor Lewis Cass was still absent on Indian affairs. John T. was propelled into the highest executive post in the land before he knew where to find a pen or what to do with it. Out of earshot, the chuckling Whigs regarded this inexperience as a stroke of good fortune. It made all sorts of things possible. They manipulated matters so that John T. would

appear to be ridiculous. The plot appeared to be the familiar formula of providing the rope and letting him hang himself, whereupon the Whigs could discredit him and block his confirmation by the Senate.

Young Mason knew. How, we don't know. He was quick to perceive a situation that only baffled John T. He did not warn his father about it apparently because he didn't feel such a thing becoming in a son.

He and his father located a house on West Congress, between Griswold and Shelby. Right behind the back door was the infamous open sewer, wriggling its horrid way obliquely across town in a little gully between Congress and Larned. Part of this house had been built from material salvaged from Fort Shelby, then in the process of demolition and a good source of building material. One whole wing of the fort, formerly part of the officers' quarters, was remodelled and opened as a girls' school. Only the gaunt old main gate was still standing. Fort Street had not been cut through; it was an unimproved alley.

The town fascinated him because it challenged him. It seemed like some conglomerate animal, ready to spring at him. Because these people were harsh and quick-tempered, he knew they expected him to be the same. To be anything else would mark him as "different", eccentric. But a frontier town is a prolific breeding ground for eccentric characters. Young Mason decided to be something else. He fancied himself as a bit polished, a cosmopolite who unluckily happened to be stranded in a backwoods village. At any rate, Detroit immediately discovered that it had a Beau Brummell in its uncouth midst. The shock was a lasting one.

Arrayed in his skin-tight black broadcloth trousers and flowing cloak, jauntily gesturing with an ebony walking stick, Tom Mason sallied forth to explore the town. From the Mansion House he could see nothing on the downriver side but a spreading log citadel and an open farm. The Mansion House happened to be on the extreme western edge of town, at Jefferson Avenue and Cass Street. Sauntering down Jefferson

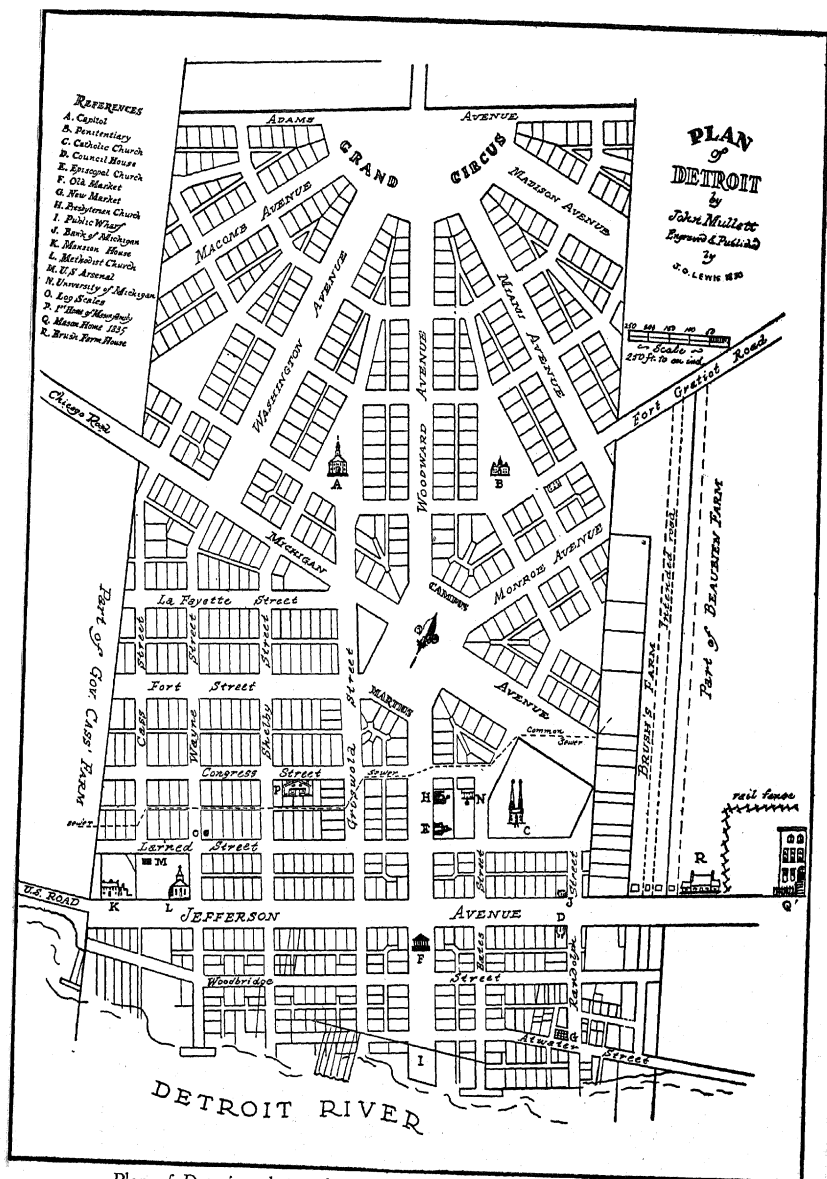
Avenue and observing with satisfaction how people stared at him, he passed rows of cluttered store windows and presently arrived at Woodward Avenue. Three blocks. He saw a huge street, astonishingly wide, cutting the town in two and running straight back from the river toward the distant forest. To his right, still in the middle of lower Woodward, was the ignoble French Market and its rabble of gesticulating French habitants. He continued onward.

Three more blocks eastward on Jefferson, and he was staring at a tumble-down gate in an old pike-pole wall. This, then, was the eastern edge of town. It was just six blocks wide on the river, a compressed slice of city sandwiched in between spreading farms.

Jefferson Avenue beckoned him onward. A row of little whitewashed French farmhouses, guarded by decaying cedar palings some ten feet high, relics of the Indian assaults twenty-five years before. In the front yard, each proudly displayed its moss-grown crucifix as a symbol of its owner's devotion, and in the back yard each displayed its towering manure pile as a symbol of his prosperity.

A distance equal to two city blocks east of the gate there was a fine clover field enclosed by a rail fence. Returning, he noticed that each farmhouse stood at the lower end of a long, narrow strip of land, tightly fenced in, stretching away from the river road. This, then, was the explanation of Detroit's astonishing shape. These ribbons of land were farms forty feet wide and more than a mile long. From the rich estate of Governor Cass on the west to the Beaubien farm on the east was about a five-minute walk. But Detroit was squeezed between them mercilessly, crowded into a compressed river frontage that now stretches seventeen miles and still is not adequate. In Tom Mason's day there was room for expansion only in one direction—away from the river into the woods.

Back there, the land belonged to the Territory and was known as the commons. Although there was nothing out there of any importance, streets were ambitiously projected on a map and a great city laid out—with a width of six blocks. The com-



Plan of Detroit redrawn from John Mullett's map of 1830. There was little above the Campus Martius then; streets were laid out, but they projected into the forest. Until 1835 Detroit was squeezed between borders only six streets apart. With the sale of the Cass farm and the final disappearance of the Beaubien strip the city began to expand swiftly. Mason's Jefferson Avenue house and the Masons' first Detroit home on Congress Street have been added in redrawing the 1830 map.

mons contained two buildings: the Territorial capitol and the jail. They were about a mile from the river, built on opposite sides of Woodward Avenue which, strangely, wasn't extended that far. Someday, the Council said, there would be streets around them.

From the river the town marched solidly, row upon row of one- and two-story white frame stores and homes, as far as Congress—four blocks. There it stopped. The Baptist Church, on the northwest corner of what is now Fort Street and Woodward Avenue, was the northern limit of the town. In our day that point is in the shadow of the smoky old city hall and has been sliced off at an angle for a bus stop. In 1828 the Council was seriously criticized for allowing the Territorial capitol building to be built so far out in the commons that it was far remote from the town and required a long, exhausting walk to get there. There was no road to it, nothing but a pathway continuing where Griswold Street gave up its wrestle with the mud at Congress. It was a good half mile from downtown.

One can find it on large-scale maps today by indexing Capitol Park. Hardly anyone in modern Detroit ever heard of such a place. It is a triangular little space at the head of Griswold, a block uptown from Michigan, crisscrossed with wide concrete sidewalks and boasting a couple of conspicuous comfort-station signs. Sunshine rarely reaches it; the towering cliffs of tremendous buildings hide it from all but historical researchers and people who are looking for parking places. How it could have been regarded, a century ago, as remote from the city of Detroit is utterly incomprehensible to today's Detroiters. Those who can find it realize that the point is in the heart of the sprawling metropolis. Tom Mason and his father, John T., frequently waded in mud over their ankles and exhausted themselves trying to walk there from the town.

They had to walk because Detroit streets were impassable for carriages. Their thin wheels would have sunk hopelessly to the hubs in the sea of mud that never seemed to dry, winter or summer. Gentlemen of affluence who could afford a negro boy to hold their steeds outside the building could ride to the

capitol. In the winter they joined everyone else in carioles, the delightful, bell-tinkling sleighs. Most of the year there was only one vehicle capable of navigating Detroit's so-called streets. It was called many a picturesque name, but we know it as a pony cart.

Elizabeth Moir Mason declined to ride in such a thing, preferring to walk in dignity. The Mason family never owned one. The cart had two wide heavy wheels and a sort of box-like body, with a pint-sized pony bobbing about between the shafts and a shouting French lad perched on one corner. Tom Mason used to watch these ridiculous things maneuver backward up to the wooden sidewalk in front of Mr. Gray's dry-goods store on Jefferson and Griswold. The boy would jump down, run around and drop the tail gate in the rear, then place a wooden box on the sidewalk. Ladies of fashion would be sitting on hassocks placed over buffalo robes spread on the floor. They arose sedately, spread their voluminous hoop skirts, poked out an inquisitive pantaletted foot and were gently lowered to the box, from which they stepped to the sidewalk.

He could see these carts, any day, struggling along the streets, carrying beautifully gowned ladies and proud young officers from the military post west of the town; officers literally gleaming in gold braid and plumes, stroking their luxuriant side whiskers and murmuring elaborate compliments. Pony carts were part of Detroit, just as was the hurry-hurry atmosphere of the streets and the sinister feeling of corruption which hung over them. Pony carts took their place with the explosive *Courier* and *Journal*, the artificially high retail prices and the violence of political argument as characteristic phases of the town's life. Tom Mason sniffed Detroit in his young nostrils, and was glad. There was a place here for him.

The census of 1830 said that Detroit had 2,222 inhabitants jammed into those twenty-four city squares. The real population was closer to 4,000. Detroit was also a military post and furnishing subsistence to many officers and men; it was the Territory's capital and full of jealous politicians with axes to grind; it was the division point of one of the busiest overland

caravans of settlers the world had ever seen, and they attracted transient farmers, commission brokers, provision merchants, people with something to sell and swindlers trying to get it away from them.

Hotels were so full that a fleet of boats lay offshore acting as floating inns. One of them was frozen in the ice during the winter of 1832 and used as a newspaper office; it contained a complete print shop being sent to Niles. Cholera, which decimated Detroit, swept ashore from plague-infested floating dormitories in the river.

The new steam ferry, established during the year of Mason's arrival, shuttled back and forth busily, bringing more and more new people into Detroit. Every day during the ice-free season, another boatload arrived from Buffalo.

Every night, or so it seemed, somebody was knifed, shot or clubbed; lawlessness was part of the scene. Outrages such as these justified two or three lines in the *Journal*; most of that space was taken up with vitriolic denunciations of the Council for tolerating such things. There were no city police and no provision for maintaining order. Fires, once started, scourged the city savagely. Part of it burned down regularly, year after year. There was no fire department.

Some citizens had organized a volunteer brigade which formed a line of buckets from the river to the fire. The results, in general, were more spectacular than efficient. Tom Mason joined this brigade and bought the required pair of buckets to keep at his house. Governor Cass had belonged to it for some years, paying out considerable sums in fines for not answering calls.

Detroit had no water supply. Some homes dug shallow wells in their back yards and bought iron pumps, but most families carried water from the river in buckets and stored it in barrels on their back porches. There were no sewers; the open ditch following an old riverbed through the gully between Congress and Larned called sufficient attention to itself without going into detail about it. There were no pavements in Detroit at all, in 1830, except some cobblestone remnants which sur-

rounded the French Market, survivors of the fire of 1805 which had laid the city completely in ruins.

Detroit was a century and a half old in 1805; it was new 1830. Judge Augustus B. Woodward was one of the more conspicuous victims of that disaster. His home was burned, too; he took charge of the homeless citizenry and laid out a new Detroit. He laid out a new street at the old market, a hundred feet wide and running straight back from the river. He named it after himself, with true Detroit aggressiveness. On the river bank, crossing this street at right angles, he laid out another. This he called Jefferson, in honor of the White House incumbent who had appointed him. Then he gave narrow lots in this new area to everybody who had owned a lot previously; first come first served. In effect, he said: "All right, boys, take it from there."

Detroit grew helter-skelter within its strait-jacket frontage. Charles Larned drew a lot a block uptown from Jefferson and the street which was cut through there was named for him. Somebody thought Congress ought to be remembered, because Congress had given the burned-out town a free grant of land on which to expand. So the next street was called Congress. There was room for only one street between Jefferson and the river. There was no question as to the name of it; a certain gentleman owned a goodly share of its commercial frontage and it was named for him—Woodbridge.

Not a single structure in town except the blackened old French Market was more than twenty-five years old. The houses were new and most of the people were new. The place had not stopped growing long enough to settle into any traditional pattern. It was just a brawling, crowded, conniving frontier outpost in a new nation.

Like so many other wild and woolly frontier towns, Detroit had courts which were pitifully transparent fakes. It had lawyers who could hardly read and councilmen who spoke English only with painful difficulty. Its stores exhibited an astonishing big-city assortment of fine silks and gleaming silver for people with a surplus of easy money. For the hard-pressed

salaried clerks and petty officials, Detroit was too expensive a place to live in. There seemed to be no comfortable middle-class mattress to take up the social shock of the structure; Detroiters were too rich or too poor and nobody was satisfied.

Prices on staple foods were too high in a day when a laboring man's wage was a dollar a day in dubious paper currency. From the *Journal* of October, 1830: percale shirting, 12½ cents per yard at Gray's; bar iron, 9 cents a pound; nails, 11 cents a pound; tea, \$1.00 to \$1.25 per pound; coffee, 25 cents. Prime beef at retail in the markets, 20 cents.

On other things the prices were encouragingly low: rum, \$1.50 per gallon; whiskey, 50 cents per gallon; brandy, \$2.00 per gallon at retail—to innkeepers, \$1.87 per gallon.

Microscopic taxes were assessed but few people paid them; ten years previously (1820) the town's entire revenue had been \$250. After that disclosure and its violent aftermath, the Council discontinued the practice of reporting how much revenue was turned in. Figures from 1820 to 1860 were very difficult of access. This situation fairly reeked of wholesale graft. The newspapers harped on that theme constantly. Yet John T., as acting governor of the Territory, found that nothing had been done and nobody around the capitol building seemed interested.

Into this explosive atmosphere came a stranger empowered by Andrew Jackson to act, and inspired by an urge to do something—John T. Mason. In the Secretary's office, politics emerged as a form of big business. John T. had never been a success in business and his feeble gestures made scant impression now. Tom Mason gradually grew aware of his father's slow progress, but the knowledge came to him slowly, over a period of months.

Winter clothed the unclean city in a spotless mantle of snow. On the silent river, boats vanished and the ice rang to the impact of skate blades. Roads froze, and the torrent of migration dried up. Detroit was lulled into its winter quiet.

Now came Dr. Douglas Houghton to deliver a series of public lectures on chemistry. Now appeared the Thespian

Corps, a proud-chested group of army officers, reciting "poetical, prose and scientific papers". Men of prominence wrote and delivered essays on bits of Detroit history before the Lyceum and Historical Society. Among them, that year, were Major Thomas Rowland, Mr. Charles C. Trowbridge, Major John Biddle and Mr. Henry R. Schoolcraft. "Balls and merry-making," observed one contemporary, "not uncommonly filled the hours of night close to the coming of morning."

Lamps burned brightly in many-paned windows. The jingle of sleigh bells sounded the overture to Detroit's winter social season. Then, and not before, the Mason girls could emerge in their woolen dresses and new muffs. Then they went forth, properly chaperoned by a pale, silent mother, to meet the daughters of other good families.

Tom Mason went out too, but not with mother. He was unnaturally subdued during his first winter in Detroit. He was not yet sure of himself. He lacked the background he needed to appraise this acquaintance or that one. He was searching, constantly investigating people to discover where they fitted into the political puzzle.

Once satisfied that a new acquaintance was a friend, Mason dropped his inhibitions as casually as he might put aside his cloak. More than once he drew a drumfire of sharp newspaper criticism. One faded old sheet of newsprint proclaims that "the handsome son of our Territorial Secretary has been displaying exuberance of *spirits* at places where such are to be found". That notice probably did him a world of good, and no harm.

He drank, not with the bottoms-up gulp of the provincial, but with the slow, easy grace of the Kentucky aristocrat. Throughout his career newspapers yapped at him because he was seen drinking so often. But he was never, even in Whig newspapers, accused of drinking too much. He drank because it was a conversational ice-breaker; because it was the custom of the day and one of its pitifully few amusements; and because, as in so many other things, he was good at it. He could appear to be drinking moodily and incessantly when he was really executing

a series of innocuous gestures. His new friends thought he was remarkable, because he was a listener, not a talker. He encouraged them to bring their bottle and their companions over to his table and talk—and talk.

While he was continuing his tavern investigations, the Mason girls were being welcomed wholeheartedly and cordially into the best homes. Emily and the next younger, Kate, aged twelve, were enrolled as pupils in a private school near St. Ann's Cathedral, conducted by an order of Belgian sisters. As pupils there, they were accepted into little-girl society as a matter of course. They met the daughter of Governor Cass; the Joseph Campeau girls, descendants of Cadillac, the brilliant daughter of Judge Desnoyer, and children of the Palmers, the Witherells, and all the first families. Emily radiantly confided all of it to her diary. She was bursting with happiness, as she had been at the school in Lexington.

"What charming recollections of those days of simple pleasures crowd upon me!" she wrote. "Good Father Kundig made for us a theatre in the basement of the Cathedral where we acted Hannah Moore's and Miss Edgeworth's pieces to admiring audiences of parents and friends. My sister Katie as Mrs. Battle in 'Old Poz', and Josie Desnoyer as William in hat and cravat of her father, a world too wide, and his brass-buttoned coat, the tails of which dragged on the floor, produced peals of laughter. My younger sister Laura with gilt paper crown and scepter and long white gown, was Canute bidding the waters retreat. Seized with stage-fright after the first scene, she refused to return to the 'boards', when Father Kundig gravely announced the 'indisposition on the part of King Canute' and prayed the audience to excuse his further appearance. Between acts he played the piano, was candle-snuffer, proprietor, scene-shifter, everything, with unfailing interest and good humor."

Elizabeth Moir Mason rarely ventured outside her home unless to accompany her daughters to affairs around their school. At home she had another problem: her invalid daughter, Theodosia. It became the family's custom to refer to its five

daughters. Theodosia was never included in the list of those who went places and had a good time. She is a dark page in the family's history. In 1830 Emily was fifteen and the eldest surviving daughter. Next in order came Kate, who was twelve, and Laura, who was nine. Cornelia, born in a rented house at Lexington during the worst of John T.'s troubles, was six that year and the baby, Sunshine Sister Mary, was a dimpled, laughing two-year-old. They were the five.

Kept in a quiet room and waited on constantly by her mother, Theodosia hardly had strength enough to make her presence felt in the family circle. She was eight years old on December 6, 1830, just about the time her three elder sisters were taking bows in the cathedral theatre. None of the family's friends ever mentioned Theodosia; few ever saw her. We do not know, a century later, the well-kept secret of Theodosia's illness. Whatever it was, it was a family matter and hardly a subject for too-close scrutiny.

However, we know that Elizabeth was hardly out of range of the invalid's feeble voice at any time. Shopping had to be done; errands accumulated more rapidly then than they do in these days of the telephone. It became Elizabeth's custom to give Granny Peg some money and a big market basket, and send her forth with a note to the grocer.

Some of the more perceptive practical jokers in the neighborhood soon discovered that the white-poll'd Guinea negress couldn't resist anything in a bottle. They waylaid her as she waddled forth to market, and surreptitiously invited her to partake. After she had partaken a few times, with many a sigh of pure pleasure, she would break forth into voodoo chants and rapid evolutions wherein she was said to oscillate the most prominent part of her ample anatomy until she had all the on-lookers beating out a jungle rhythm and shouting for more. Later, Granny Peg would come forlornly home tight as a drum, having forgotten entirely what she was sent for.

Elizabeth properly called her down for it time after time, while Granny Peg hung her massive head and begged forgiveness, vowing that it would never happen again. Never! But it

happened regularly, until Granny Peg had become an established Detroit character.

2

There was another Detroit that lay behind the store fronts and the crowded sidewalks. Just as the fire of the previous spring seemed to Tom Mason to be so symbolic of the incendiary atmosphere of the citizens, the peculiar custom of moving buildings furiously from place to place typified the other Detroit. The city's place in the frontier scheme of things was somewhat like those buildings. Constantly changing, being yanked and tugged back and forth, subjected to prodigious pull and protesting by loud creaks and groans, Detroit couldn't even keep its buildings on permanent foundations, let alone its policies.

Peter J. Desnoyer was one of Detroit's ablest citizens of the period. When he was seventy-six and a part of Detroit's momentous earlier history, he told the *Free Press* that between 1820 and 1835 the business of house-moving was a major occupation. His first experience with it came when he was five, and his father moved all the furniture out of their house and dumped it in the middle of Woodward Avenue near Jefferson, with Peter deposited underneath the dining-room table so they'd know where he was. When the furniture was collected again, the house was somewhere else. Mr. Desnoyer recalled that not a single structure in Detroit by 1835 was on its original foundations, with one exception—the Joseph Campeau residence on Jefferson between Griswold and Shelby.

After the fire of April, 1830, the Palmers moved what was left of their house up to a new lot on the corner of Woodward and John R., a suburban estate at the time. Dr. Brown put his house on rollers and moved it clear across town to a lot he had just purchased in the rear of Mrs. Beaubien's farmhouse, just east of St. Ann's Cathedral. Charles Busch built a hardware store on that site, but in 1832 that was moved, too, farther

up Jefferson. That one Jefferson Avenue lot, fifty by a hundred feet, had four buildings within fifteen years.

The First Protestant Society bought the disused Military Hall of Fort Shelby and slid it down the length of Fort Street to become a parish house for their small yellow church at Woodward and Larned. Soon it was moved from there to another lot to serve as a city courtroom. The officers' quarters at the fort were moved, house by house, by the city to fill up gaps in the new streets north of Congress. Even the city itself was caught in this craze. Detroit's first fire hall was moved at least three times. At one time it occupied the site of the old city council hall at Jefferson and Randolph, forcing the ruffled city fathers to arise with dignity and cart their council hall out into the commons.

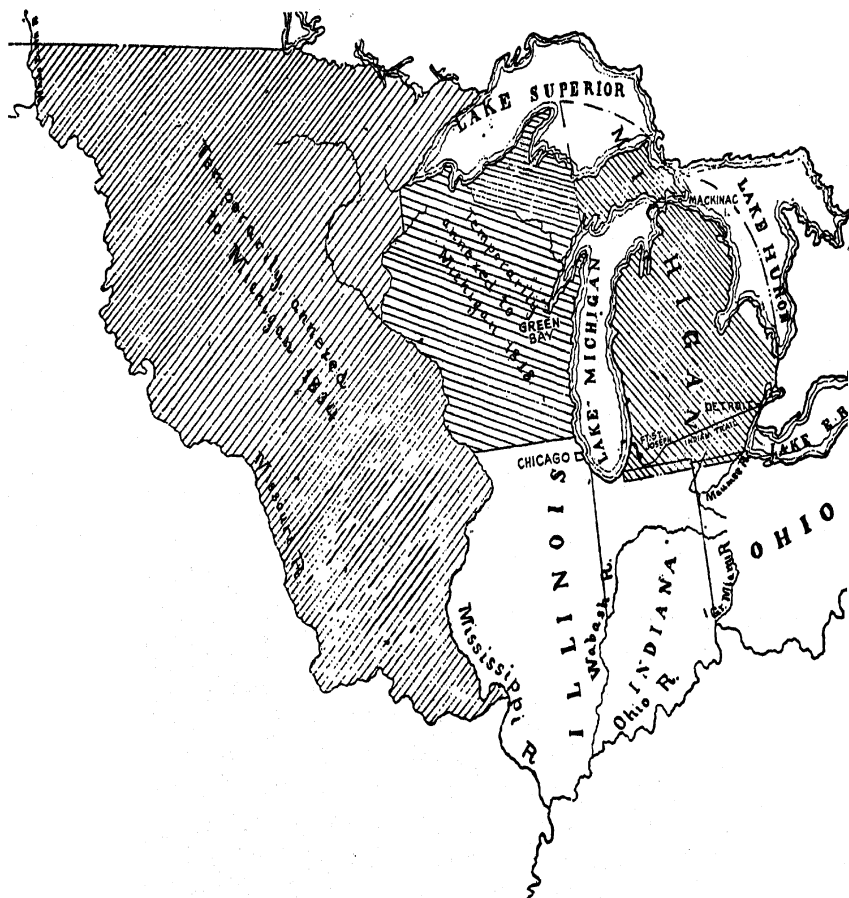
If people didn't like their neighbors, it was absurdly easy to sell their lot or trade it for one somewhere else, then move the house. These houses had neither cellars, furnaces, plumbing, wiring, concrete sidewalks, garages nor air-conditioning ducts. Foundations were nothing more than stone supports, easily duplicated at any other location the owner might fancy. The ease of house-moving gave Detroit an appearance rather like the interior of an old-time vaudeville house. With every new act there was a new backdrop.

It contributed to Detroit's air of unreality; it was like a city that had been thrust ashore there by some indignant boat captain, and which might decide to migrate farther westward.

That was about all Detroit was good for, in Tom Mason's first jumbled impression. He saw the city as a sort of check valve in a pipe, passing along people and wagonloads of freight, snapping shut when there was a tinkle of money to be heard, and steadfastly holding the pipe closed against traffic or uncomplimentary reports going in the opposite direction.

It was virtually impossible for the authorities at Washington to learn what was going on in the Territory. They knew the physical facts about it, but were kept in ignorance of the feelings of the people.

John T. found himself acting governor of a bailiwick which, on a map, stretched limitlessly to the unknown western plains. It comprised the present State of Michigan, and the present State of Wisconsin, an undefined expanse of something or other westward of the Mississippi which had been added to it from the broken-up Northwest Territory in 1818. Nobody knew just how many square miles Michigan Territory contained.



Michigan Territory before the admission of the state. A sketch map in the report of the first State Surveyor, 1837.

It extended westward from the middle of the Detroit River to a point which was always in dispute, but somewhere around the upper Missouri River. Michigan Territory thus extended from the Canadian border to St. Louis along the Missouri and White Earth Rivers, from Lake Superior to the northern boundaries of Indiana and Ohio, and from Detroit something more than a thousand miles northwest.

Of that, the major portion was unmapped and unknown to all but a few explorers. The Territory which was administered from Detroit comprised two sections: "the land east of Lake Michigan", meaning the present peninsula known by that name, and "the land west of Lake Michigan", meaning the Wisconsin area from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River.

Beyond the Mississippi, the huge empire of the Northwest was merely annexed to Michigan Territory for administrative purposes. It was administered by Federal officials, acting under instructions from Washington, independently of the Territorial officials at Detroit.

In 1830 this vast inland empire contained only 32,531 known inhabitants. About three thousand of them were in "the land west of Lake Michigan". There were new settlements at Green Bay and Mineral Point, mostly workers in the newly discovered lead mines. The balance were scattered across the lower half of the peninsula of Michigan.

Twelve counties had been organized by that year, and duly recognized by official proclamations signed by Governor Cass. They had spread westward from Detroit across the State, slowly, as more and more settlers took up land and became permanent additions to the population. Twelve more counties were in the process of organization, but in 1830 had not been recognized.

The organized counties elected their own local constables and supervisors. Each county elected a delegate to the Territorial Council. The Council, in turn, elected a delegate to the national Congress at Washington who represented the Territory there but who had no vote.

John T. was acting governor whenever his superior had to be

absent. Upon him also descended the responsibility of being Indian Agent and administering the affairs of twelve tribes. He had the power to pardon offenses against Federal laws; the power of appointment of all judges of county courts, justices of the peace, judges of probate, court clerks and judicial personnel in general.

He could have been a dictator had he been nervy enough to assume command. But he was afraid, timid. The Whigs continued to run the Territory by merely advising him what to do. He didn't know the people.

The men who knew Michigan best were the woodsmen who walked across it. They were the veteran trappers, traders, surveyors, scouts and guides, who felt with their calloused feet how the firm land gave way to treacherous swamp; who saw how hills hid deep valleys, and what was at the bottom of them. Days into the interior, they were close to the people because they were close to the land, and the land created the people.

After them came the politicians. They fancied that they knew more about what the people needed than did the people themselves. Their function was to rule. The awful distances, the thin sprinkling of settlers, the tortoise-like pace of transportation—all these things contributed to a nullification of the spirit of democracy although its outward forms were preserved. Each isolated county aggressively voted and debated about local matters, acting as a separate political unit in a sea of forest and keeping local democracy alive. But from Detroit came only orders, removals, new appointments, all the symbols of a higher administrative authority in which the local people had only a theoretical share.

Politically, Detroit had been a tight dictatorship since soon after the election of John Quincy Adams, and the full flowering of the local Whig machines. Detroit was only one example of small-town Whig machines which collectively ruled the United States until the election of Andrew Jackson. Detroit, ruling its far-flung province almost by decree, with just a show of approval by a complaisant Council, had a boss. The day-by-day administration of such a political monstrosity would have

been impossible without some strong central figure who could assume, and hold, command. In Detroit, as elsewhere in 1830, the boss was a Whig. His name was William Woodbridge.

The name Whig was originally an insult. The term had come from England, where it had long been a symbol of pomposity, ineffectual harrumph-ing and general stuffed-shirtedness. During the first decade of the century and shortly afterward, it had been used as a Democratic jibe in political handbills to describe a sort of unorganized new party that was springing up. The party was a direct descendant of Alexander Hamilton's Federalists, one of the original participants in our two-party system of government. It had been the original conservative party of the United States. Its members were men of wealth and influence who roundly distrusted the universal franchise and believed in the rights of property. After the Burr conspiracy the party suffered a serious disaster from which it never recovered. It split apart into disputing factions.

Out-of-power Federalists joined with out-of-sympathy rich men during Jefferson's administration to form a sort of nucleus around which a new conservative party appeared. The term Whig, at first an opposition insult, eventually appeared as the party's official designation on the ballot.

It was the party of Henry Clay, just as the Democrats were the party of Andrew Jackson. The vicious political warfare, and the personal animosity, between the two had identified the issues with the men. The Whig and Democratic policies became whatever Clay and Jackson were trying to promote. John T. Mason was the first Democrat appointed to a post in Michigan Territory in many years. He became, to the outraged Whigs, a symbol of Andrew Jackson and rabble rule. The very sight of him aroused die-hard Whigs to fury.

Governor Lewis Cass was a staunch Democrat. But he had been appointed by Madison previous to Monroe's era of good feeling, and furthermore he was anything but a politician. He was a major national figure. His fame was world-wide. At Washington his name was spoken with profound respect. Cass was primarily a soldier, who, after a glorious military

career, had accepted appointment as a territorial governor merely to offer his country the further service of exploration, colonization, negotiation with suspicious Indian tribes and blazing the trail for the long wagon trains of settlers. He seldom occupied his office. When he did, it was to catch up on accumulated office work. He left again for the forests as soon as he could.

When John T. arrived in Detroit and introduced himself around the capitol building, a form announcement of that fact was sent to Cass by messenger. Cass was very busy with further negotiations with the Indians of Saginaw Bay. He was leading up to his master stroke: the final treaty in a series of twenty-one which established United States control throughout the entire peninsula. It was the climax of fifteen years' incessant work. It meant everything in the world to Lewis Cass, and to his career. The arrival of a new Secretary was a very minor matter, certainly nothing to justify returning to Detroit to look at him.

John T. located the building upon arrival, walked in and asked somebody for the office of the Secretary. He was directed upstairs and down the central corridor. The Secretary's office was the first door on the left; the Governor's chamber was located at the end of the long hallway directly over the Council hall on the first floor.

The timid Virginian entered the Secretary's office and saw a florid, but pleasant, middle-aged gentleman of poised and distinguished appearance. The man shook his hand cordially. He said he was James Witherell, Mason's "predecessor". Witherell urged him to be seated; he was kindly of voice and did not appear to be in the least upset over his removal. He had expected it, he said, ever since the election of Jackson in 1828.

His first act was a gesture of genuine friendship toward his successor. But Witherell, unfortunately, was a mere political satellite of the Whig boss. John T. had not been in the building a day before he discovered that sad fact. Well-meaning people told him that Woodbridge cracked the whip; Woodbridge

held the Territory in his pocket; Woodbridge was the man to see before anything could be done.

When John T. first gazed upon this awesome figure, he beheld in Woodbridge a character totally unlike anything in his wide experience. Nobody like Woodbridge had ever held public office in Virginia, nor in Kentucky. There have been few like him in the history of the nation.

William Woodbridge had lived a tragic life, and reflected his early hardships in everything he said and did. He was a professional politician, one of the first in the Northwest. He was really a generation ahead of his time, for it was Woodbridge who introduced boss rule to Michigan and who proved, as other bosses have proved, that his way was the most efficient way. It was frequently cruel and always secretive, but it administered the Territory smoothly and profitably for his men.

Fever and coarse food had weakened him until, in 1830, he was a walking skeleton. Stooped and sinister, white hair straggling down over his ears in imitation of his beloved patron Clay, sunken cheeks, harsh lines in his parchment-like skin, Woodbridge looked like an aged Svengali. He stared forth from watery, myopic eyes and had no teeth, so that strangers often assumed that the poor old man was on the verge of tears.

This appearance of senility was startlingly at variance with Woodbridge's true condition. He found it useful when he wanted to arouse sympathy in someone, as he did when Jackson's vengeance finally caught up with him two years later. He whimperingly told the Detroit bar, solidly Whig of course, that it was too bad that Jackson had seen fit to remove him at his advanced age when he was "too old to seek new fields". He referred to the notice as a "contemptuous ejection"; the lawyers wept.

He was not too old, nor was he weak physically or mentally. He was exactly fifty in October, 1830. He looked eighty. He had the surprising strength, and the premature appearance of old age, so characteristic of the true pioneer. Woodbridge was weeping alligator tears in 1830 about being old; he outlived both the Masons, father and son, and held the governor-

ship himself long after they were disposed of. Woodbridge rounded out a half century on the public payroll as a United States Senator almost until the outbreak of the Civil War.

He was a man in whom the fires of revenge were fed slowly, carefully and incessantly. He had never seen John T. Mason in his life until he stealthily appeared at the door of Witherell's office while the two were chatting. He had nothing whatever against John T. as a man. But Woodbridge was utterly incapable of distinguishing between a personal and a political enemy. John T. was Jackson at his worst, to Woodbridge. He was a scoundrel, a usurper, a pretender who had grabbed power through some hideous *coup d'état*, a foe to be hounded and persecuted without a moment's relief. Someone had come hurrying to Woodbridge with the news of John T.'s appointment. Woodbridge was ready. He had been ready a long time.

During the violent presidential campaign of 1828, Woodbridge was fighting hard and well for the Whigs. But he was a shrewd political analyst and a judge of trends; he knew there was a widespread outcry against Henry Clay. Secretly he expected Jackson to be elected. So he quietly built himself a storm cellar for the blow he knew was coming.

He had to sacrifice Witherell, but what of that? Witherell was a justice of the Territorial supreme court, highly-educated, able, fair, a jurist who had won respect from everyone. Woodbridge, although the holder of a law degree and thoroughly grounded in legal procedure, was essentially a politician. He had been a State representative in Ohio before migrating to Michigan. He had campaigned for offices like prosecuting attorney and State Senator. Most of his adult life had been devoted to campaigning and political horse-trading.

In 1828 he had been Territorial Secretary for fourteen years. For part of that time he had simultaneously held the post of Collector of the Port, at an additional salary and a three-and-a-half-percent rake-off on imports; he conducted a lucrative private law practice besides and owned valuable downtown business property. In that year, before the election, he

called Witherell in and forced the judge to change places with him.

Thus Witherell became Secretary and Woodbridge sat serenely upon the Supreme Court bench, where the "spoils system" axe would probably miss him. It was Witherell's name that Andrew Jackson read in his list of prominent Whig jobholders.

Woodbridge was not a success on the bench. His political partiality was demonstrated more than once; he jailed people who accused him of favoritism and in general behaved badly. But he clung to the job.

After John T. and his son Tom had come to know Woodbridge better, they realized that such actions were quite in character. His manner of speaking stamped him as a man who might do anything. He would simply stand and stare at a man for some time before replying to a question, wobbling his toothless gums and blinking his weak eyes as if he couldn't quite summon the strength to make himself heard. Finally, when he spoke, his voice would be low and mumbling. He used the most elaborate, formal phraseology, never asserting anything boldly but managing to convey a hint.

"I humbly beg you to excuse me on that point; I have insufficient knowledge of it to justify an opinion. . . . My excellent colleague, Secretary Mason, who really knows much more of this matter than I, will doubtless enlighten you. . . ." He was a stickler for verbal bowings and scrapings. He frequently arose and stalked indignantly from a room if there was the slightest hint of profanity or obscenity. He never spoke ill of any man, a point oft quoted by historians. But he could verbally slit a man's throat with the gentleness of a benediction.

This was Woodbridge, the Whig boss, the man John T. had to fight and beat if he expected to hold his new job. In this, as in so many crises in his life, John T. Mason entered battle practically weaponless. He was really incapable of this sort of thing. It never occurred to him, as it did to his son

Tom almost instantly, that Woodbridge would have a trap baited for him and would propel him toward it with courteous bows, mumbled compliments, innocent little gestures.

Gradually John T. Mason began to see the wolf behind Woodbridge's grandmotherly make-up. When he did, he unconsciously changed the history of the Northwest for the next hundred years by an act of reckless, adolescent impulsiveness.

3

Just before Christmas, 1830, Cass returned to Detroit.

The Governor's entry into the city was hardly a triumphant procession. The great man and his suite, almost frozen, ears wrapped in rags and leather boots stiff with ice, crawled wearily into town astride horses so exhausted they could hardly move. Cass retired to his bullet-scarred log mansion on the river bank next door to the Mansion House, on Jefferson, to thaw out. There was a notice in the newspaper stating that he had returned, but no word of what he had accomplished.

Cass was rubbed back to life for a few days, and presently rode to the capitol building on a fresh horse. John T. was overwhelmed with relief. Here was a fellow Democrat; here was a friendly superior to take over the reins of office and protect him. Cass's greeting was friendly, but not effusive. John T. said that he wanted to sit down with him at once and tell him of all the pitfalls set before him by Woodbridge and his cohorts.

The Governor was sorry, but that would have to wait. He had just returned from a most important mission. The authorities in Washington, especially Colonel McKenney, would need to be informed at once as to the feeling among the Indians about relinquishing all the tribal claims to the lower peninsula. Then, he said, he must prepare his annual message to the Council and draft the administrative program for the ensuing year. Some other time.

John T. received the impression that Cass knew all about Woodbridge and wasn't alarmed. It was plain that Cass

couldn't be bothered with petty political squabbles and declined to soil his hands with them.

However, Cass's coming was a boon. It meant that out-of-state sheriffs and delegates and judges and people with grievances were no longer shunted to John T.'s office by the wily Whigs. They all wanted to see Cass, now. The Secretary was spared the risk of appointing people, week after week, to jobs he never knew existed and which in some cases probably didn't. Cass seemed to know every citizen of the Territory by his first name. Looking over a sheaf of new appointments, he would bark out orders.

"No, not that man. Last year the Pottawatomis complained to me that he had sold them flintlock muskets that always misfired. He got them at an auction somewhere; just junk. He's a swindler, and he gets no appointment from me. Present my regrets to the county board; advise them to nominate an honest man. Now, this boy's all right. I know his people; I danced with his mother two years ago at the village of Ann Arbor."

On December 20th, a committee of five citizens of Jacksonburgh arrived with a petition asking that an appropriation be made for repairs to the Territorial Road passing through that village. And Cass was furious, says a faded old letter of the period. "I surveyed that road myself in 1828; your town sprang up after the road was completed. What have you done? You have not yet built so much as a bridge across the Grand River at your village."

John T.'s office had been crowded with people like these. He didn't know them; he had no answer that would satisfy them. He loved to watch Cass, the master, bring these people up short with blunt truths about themselves and their motives. It took Cass about thirty seconds to dispose of a demand which would send John T. pacing his office floor in worry for thirty days.

General Lewis Cass was about five feet tall and built like a pickle barrel. Bulbous nose, double chin, high collar that came up the sides of his fat neck and looked strong enough to choke

him; extremely short legs that gave him a noticeable waddle. His usual costume included an ill-fitting tail coat that hung on him like a tent and seemed about three sizes too large. It protruded out in front of his rounded stomach and dropped a pair of enormous coat tails almost to his heels. The coat became one of Michigan's great puzzles. Cass wore it while an artist painted his portrait for the capitol building. For some fifty years it aroused endless debate. Later generations vowed that no man would wear a garment like that; it was assumed that the artist was afflicted with double vision or a slapstick sense of humor. It made the great man look like a German comedian, they said. Nevertheless Cass wore it, and he did look like a comedian in it.

His contemporaries adjusted themselves to the sight of General Cass waddling down Jefferson Avenue dragging these out-size coat tails in the mud. They did not see anything funny in the spectacle. Other people wore costumes much funnier. They saw only Lewis Cass, Michigan's foremost citizen and America's most valuable Indian expert; Cass, the patient explorer and trail blazer who pointed out places to build cities and built roads to realize them. People made room for Cass on the crowded streets, and bowed to him with deference as he passed.

When Cass raised his short body into the governor's chair, Woodbridge went into an eclipse. That was one consolation, John T. told himself. There was no question now as to who held the Territory in his pocket. Woodbridge paled into insignificance beside Cass's impressive public stature. He shrank to the figure of a grumpy old politician who knew how to keep silent when the "Genr'l" was in the capitol.

With Woodbridge quiet, and Cass making all the decisions, John T. could sigh with relief and relax. The corridor outside his office was still full of jostling people with grievances, but none of them came to see him. They were waiting their turn to see the "Genr'l". John T. had a massive piece of furniture in a corner of his office which was called, appropriately, a secretary. It was eight feet high and built of solid, enduring Michi-

gan walnut; bookshelves above for the calf-bound legislative acts and a desk below with a smooth leather top for him to write on. John T. could tilt back his chair and put his feet up on it. That was about all he had to do after Cass's return.

Frequently there would be a stentorian roar, echoing down the corridor. "Mr. Mason!" Down would come John T.'s feet, to patter along the hall to Cass's chamber. "Yes, sir?" "Mr. Mason, kindly prepare thirteen letters at once, to the following-named justices of the peace—"

John T. burned. That was a clerk's job.

Presently appeared his handsome son, Tom. The next time that bellowed "Mr. Mason!" rolled down the corridor like the echo of a cannon shot, young Tom urged his father to keep his feet up on the secretary's smooth desk top. "Let me answer that one, Father."

John T. was all too willing. So was Tom Mason. Cass apparently liked him because he would soak up information like a sponge. He wanted to know all about everything. He was determined to keep his father in his office, secluded, as much as possible. He evidently believed that the less John T. did, the fewer things he could be blamed for later. The post of Territorial Secretary bore no appropriation for office help, but young Mason didn't object to working free. He knew that sooner or later John T. would commit a political blunder that would give Woodbridge his opportunity to arouse the people against him. To prevent that, young Mason determined to learn the routine of the Secretary's office thoroughly, and handle as much of it as circumstances would allow.

In one of those intuitive flashes, young Mason had seen trouble ahead. Perhaps he never put it into words. But his subsequent moves, throughout the winter of 1830-31, seem to bear out the belief that he was proceeding step by step along a prearranged schedule. He was trying to pull Woodbridge's teeth.

Mason knew that the climax of John T.'s career would come at the moment his name rolled forth from the lips of the Senate clerk on a motion for confirmation. Woodbridge would be

ready with strong Whig support to block it. Mason knew, or thought he knew, a way to get it through. His success would depend upon John T.'s acts and mistakes during his brief term as a recess appointee.

As long as John T. had nothing to do, he loomed up as quite an imposing figure of a Secretary. So Tom Mason worked, as he had not worked since his days as a grocery clerk, when he kept up his college studies by flickering candlelight after the store was closed. He started at the bottom, with the simplest official chores. He copied letters and affixed wax seals. He filled inkwells. He shadowed John T. constantly, and won a place for himself with Cass. He pumped information from the other clerks; found out from them how certain routine chores were done.

Commissions appointing some black-bearded settler as a justice of the peace began filtering into the townships in Tom Mason's beautiful copperplate script. Letters from Cass to bureau chiefs in Washington concerning the day-to-day developments in the Territory—Tom Mason penned them, too, and learned from them many a lesson in statecraft.

Many years later it appeared that Cass had taken a liking to young Mason from the start and was secretly encouraging him. Tall, straight, with luxuriant wavy black hair, and a languid, aloof gaze that Cass found very useful, Tom Mason became a familiar character around the capitol building. Cass adopted him as a sort of unofficial greeter. He was a go-between to sort out callers who were really important from the riffraff who merely wanted something.

Cass bore a general's commission in the regular army and had been a famous military figure ever since the War of 1812. He was the military administrator of Michigan before it had any civil organization. He knew what a comfort an efficient aide could be. He valued a man who could get things done without repeatedly asking elementary questions. He noticed that he never had to repeat instructions given to Tom Mason. He never complimented him, as far as records show. The busy old general growled out a succession of orders, then sat

back with the confidence of a man who knew that those orders would be carried out with no blunders.

Then, afterward, there were the long, lamplit evenings. What Tom Mason did for recreation, no one knows. Most of the time he was studying. But there were occasions when he put aside his books and sauntered downtown, dropping in at various clubs and taprooms in his easily recognized gleaming silk hat and ruffled opera cloak. He didn't like to go hunting because it entailed considerable physical discomfort. He indulged in no outdoor sport, winter or summer. Euchre, the drawing-room craze of the period, bored him. Occasionally on fine days he and his firm-chinned sister Emily would saddle borrowed horses and ride out the River Road; a chance to let their horses amble along while they talked confidentially about family matters.

Tom Mason was a city-dweller who never enjoyed the pioneer's harsh contact with primitive life. He acquired a wide repute throughout Detroit as a *bon vivant* and drawing-room decoration. He was polished and suave; he had a vocabulary richly embellished with long words that sounded dignified and complimentary; he usually looked bored and hard to amuse. Perhaps for that very reason, hostesses eagerly sought him out and surrounded him with people. He quickly dominated a drawing room, not so much because of what he said as by the sophisticated, weary way he said it.

Detroit had never seen such clothes. Linen sparkling white; just a touch of starch in the ruffles to make them stand out stiffly. Coats black or dark-blue, always fine broadcloth; cloth-covered buttons instead of the popular brass buttons, because he regarded such things as a breach of good taste. Mason's coats were built up just a trifle at the shoulders to conceal their pronounced slope. They were smooth and wrinkle-free. They were superbly tailored so that the tails draped straight and free. He did not introduce the Belgian lace handkerchief to Detroit—Governor Hull had worn one. But Mason knew more ways to gesture nonchalantly with this bit of finery than anyone other than Beau Brummell himself. When he took

his satin-lined, three-valance cloak from his black servant, fastened his white gloves, patted his towering silk hat carelessly down upon his luxuriant black curls, at a precariously rakish angle, then caught up an ivory-headed walking stick and stalked forth into society, he was a figure to make anyone stare.

He had found that it was no more expensive to order his well-draped tail coats and tight trousers from New York tailors than to buy them at inflated Detroit prices from merchants who did not know the art of fitting. If General Cass were an example of what a Detroit tailor regarded as a suit of clothes, Mason's well-arched eyebrows expressed what he thought about that.

One of Mason's chief forms of usefulness around the capitol building was to provide an awe-inspiring façade behind which Cass could assume a certain dignity before people saw him. Provincial taxpayers, with the dust of days heavy upon their clumsy homespun, came storming into the capitol and encountered the Mason magnificence. They sensed that he must be somebody vastly more important than anyone in a homespun jacket could be. And when Mason gazed down at them from his nearly six feet of stiff-backed, heavy-lidded indifference, inquiring in a silken voice how he might be of service to them, the angered citizens frequently stood and gulped.

This was a pose completely artificial to his true nature, but he made use of it. He was eager to learn everything, and friendly to anyone who could teach him. He was deeply sincere about his love for what came to be known as the great game of politics. To him, outwitting Woodbridge was a major career, ranking with Cass's conquest of the Northwest. He became a political checker-player instead of a grand strategist of Cass's stature because he learned the game through tactics instead of strategy. Occasionally he could put on a frosty front and chill a noisy caller. But his weakness was in the opposite direction. He was overanxious.

He acquired a habit of dashing about the building and about

Detroit, debating with anyone on any subject so long as it was political. He gave forth impulsive opinions where none had been asked; he fancied himself as one of the powers behind Cass's carved oaken chair. Even John T. heard frequently that his handsome son talked too much.

Mason, perforce, subsided and merged into the background as soon as the Territorial Council convened early in January, 1831. Cass had spent a good deal of time preparing his annual message and being very secretive about it, which spelled trouble. In the opinion of the older clerks, that meant that he was about to reveal something.

Mason was not overly impressed by the thirteen stiff-whiskered old provincials who appeared and took their seats. He didn't know any of them by sight. By name, he recognized them as the delegates from the twelve organized counties in Michigan, plus one from "the land west of Lake Michigan", now Wisconsin. The Council met only once a year and then only for a few desultory weeks. It usually acted as a sounding board through which the administration could seek answering vibrations back in the townships, and as a means of attracting attention to grievances which Woodbridge and his helpers had managed to conceal from Cass.

A resolution was passed at this session calling upon Congress for four townships out of Cass's new land grant to support a silk industry. "The peninsula, on account of its locality, requires that its inhabitants should be engaged in some branch of industry," it complained, adding that Michigan was so far away from factories that its farmers had to pay two freight bills on everything—ship their produce to Eastern markets and import the small amount of manufactured goods it brought. "The common productions of the agriculturalist poorly pay for the labor they cost after deducting the cost of transportation." It was felt that a silk industry would be one step in the right direction; Michigan ought to manufacture something.

A lengthy discussion about exorbitant transportation costs ensued. The delegates decided that the Territory needed more

roads, bigger Federal appropriations. This was not original enough to impress Congress, so the delegates wondered what else they could ask for.

They decided that a system of canals across Michigan, from Lake Huron to Lake Michigan, was the country's crying need. These were to be constructed, of course, at the expense of the Federal government as a means of stimulating commerce between the East and the region farther west. There was many a glowing reference to the natural valley between Saginaw Bay and the headwaters of the Grand River. "Nature appears to have pointed out this connection," hinted the resolution. It was prepared and forwarded to Congress. No one heard of it again.

Cass's annual message went into detail about something much more practical. The States of Ohio and Indiana, he said, were encroaching year by year upon Michigan and "pushing their territory northward into areas which are the property of citizens of Michigan Territory". This ought to be stopped at once, he said. He urged a Council inquiry into the matter of boundaries, forthwith, and a study of how best to see that those boundaries were protected. This was Mason's first introduction to the boundary dispute, a keg of political dynamite which blew up under him some years later.

While the Legislature was still in session, Mason's attention was drawn elsewhere. His father, side-tracked into oblivion, had been sitting there in his office, feet up on the desk, looking out of the window. He had been thinking. That was fatal to Tom Mason's whole scheme.

When he heard about it, the son felt again that taut sensation of apprehension, of disasters to come. Whenever John T. had too much time to think, he invariably did the wrong thing.

John T. had been thinking how much he hated his job, and how bitterly he detested politics in general. He saw quickly that, with Cass firmly established in the governor's chair, the Secretaryship was not an administrative post at all but just a glorified clerkship. It was a daily drudgery of routine, of writing out proclamations and appointments, and of jumping

when Cass roared. John T. didn't know when Cass proposed to go out of town again and restore him to command. But if he did, John T. would quickly feel the point of Woodbridge's stiletto between his ribs. Either way, John T. was thoroughly disillusioned and disgusted with his job. He was sick of being a target for both Woodbridge and Cass.

But there was the family to support. Himself and Elizabeth, old Grandmother Moir, Tom, invalid Theodosia, five growing girls and three dependent blacks. On twelve hundred a year it was an everlasting grind which kept him on the verge of poverty. Into John T.'s mind there floated a vision which he had seen before: money, great piles of money. He wanted to quit, to go plunging into something else and make himself rich again.

He had been thinking, he told Tom, about Tom's famed grandfather, the first Stevens T. Mason. Well, he went on, the distinguished senator had left a bequest which had come down to John T. when the will was probated. It was some sort of land grant in the South; the grant was not specific but as far as he could see the land was in Texas and just north of it, in the Red River Valley. Ah! That was where John T. longed to go.

Michigan Territory was a blind alley and never would amount to anything. But down there a man could get rich! It was new, unorganized, unexploited, just the kind of virgin land where fortunes originated.

It had been granted to Colonel Stevens T. Mason by a grateful Continental Congress as a reward for having served with distinction as Washington's aide throughout the Revolution. The subject of Texas was getting a lot of newspaper space just now, John T. told his son. He had checked up this grant and found that it was perfectly valid, with one trifling exception—the territory containing it was no part of the United States.

It might go to Texas and eventually be returned to Mexico. In that case it was worthless. But if Texas someday came into the Union, John T. would be rich.

He wanted to go to Washington and talk it over with Andy Jackson. He knew that Andy was more than anxious—he was eager—to start something which would bring Texas into the Union. He was said to be plotting outright revolution. He had emissaries there reporting to him from every section. Sam Houston, one of Jackson's most intimate friends, was leaving Tennessee for Texas, and was regarded as a sort of ambassador from Jackson to see what could be done openly or subversively.

Maybe—John T. rubbed his chin thoughtfully—maybe if Andy Jackson knew that John T. had this big land grant there and thus a legitimate reason for poking his nose into the region, maybe Andy could find something for him to do.

"But what about us?" demanded Tom. "Who's going to take your post? Who's going to support the family if you leave?"

"You," said John T. And he chuckled.

4

Washington was as infernally hot in June, 1831, as it always has been every June. John T. Mason, Secretary of Michigan Territory, and his son, Stevens T. Mason, were guests at a new Washington hotel. For six weeks previous to their departure there had been whispered confidences and quick visits to prominent men. Tom Mason, the son, was the subject. It was hinted that he might become Territorial Secretary, and what did they think about such an appointment? Some of them thought it was all right, because Cass could supervise him. Others didn't think so; they feared a good deal of opposition when it became known.

Cass himself had been in Washington twice; in May for a few days, then he returned in June for a long stay which lasted until late in July. He had been in conference with the President every day, for hours at a time. He explained these lengthy visits by saying that, after all, he had been in the forests for

fifteen years and had a wealth of information about our north-west frontier.

Cass's biographers interpret these visits somewhat differently. They agree that while the pudgy military hero might have reported on the progress of colonization, he was actually forced into politics for the first time in his long career. He and Jackson were wading in political details up to their ears. The whole subject of the Northwest's party structure was thoroughly canvassed. It was after one of these White House visits that Cass had suggested in a letter to John T. that it was now time to come to Washington and bring Tom.

If there had been any observant Washington columnists in those days they would have rushed frantically to their typewriters. It was as plain as the wart on Cass's face that there was a deal in the wind.

Late in June they arrived, and found Jackson very cordial.

This surprised Cass, who had a rather indifferent opinion of John T.'s ability. It would have surprised Cass again to have read the wily Jackson's mind and see why he was so glad to see John T. His mysterious land grant gave Jackson the wide-open opportunity he had sought for years to place a secret agent down there among the Cherokees on the Texas border. In truth, Jackson was delighted. John T. didn't have to be a genius to make himself invaluable to Jackson in the South.

In making it possible for John T. to leave for the South, Jackson had to scramble up the entire administrative organization of Michigan Territory. He made several moves of national importance, and made them quickly.

He saw in Cass the ideal national figure to add prestige to his sadly battered cabinet. Major Eaton resigned forthwith, and Cass was promised the post of Secretary of War but warned to say nothing until the formal announcement was released from the White House. Cass accepted on those terms, and held his tongue until Major Eaton could find a lame excuse for quitting the cabinet which he had done so much to injure.

No successor to Cass as governor of Michigan was selected. Jackson received John T. and Tom Mason in a long private interview, ignored the father while he chatted with the son and beamed radiantly upon him. The childless old man "loved Tom Mason like a son and told him so; repeated again and again his protestations of confidence and affection", according to Lawton Hemans, whose intensive research into Mason's career was published years later as an official state document. Jackson remarked that every time he saw Tom Mason he admired him more deeply. Jackson thought he was a genius; a brilliant exception to all rules and the best possible choice for Secretary.

In avoiding the selection of a successor to Cass, Jackson told Tom Mason that he wanted the youth to assume bold command and run the Territory. He should not be hampered by a political superior, who, after the triumphs of Cass, would have had scant chance to assert any actual influence anyhow.

Thus, in mid-July, 1831, the White House released the following interesting information:

Major Eaton had announced his resignation from the cabinet. To replace him as Secretary of War, the President had appointed General Lewis Cass of Michigan Territory, outstanding hero of the War of 1812.

John T. Mason, Secretary of Michigan Territory, had submitted his resignation in order to accept appointment as a brigadier general of volunteers. He would leave at once "upon an undisclosed mission" for the President.

Stevens T. Mason, son of General Mason, had been named to succeed his father as Secretary of Michigan Territory.

It must have required several days for Tom Mason to catch his breath.

During those days he was a guest at the White House frequently, a dinner companion of the President and often seen at his side whenever the feeble old man rode through town in his open landau. It is apparent that Tom Mason would rather have been at the hotel arranging family matters with his father.

But Jackson seemed to cling to him, insist that he stay beside him and listen. The last thing Jackson said was:

"Now, Tom, write to me. Tell me everything that's going on out there. I want to hear from you frequently, not just official reports but anything you can think of. I'll back you to the limit, boy. Assert your authority and if you get into trouble, *notify me!*"

The youth bowed politely, and promised.

General John T. Mason sat in his hotel room regarding his certificate of appointment with astonishment. He was exultant. "Told you so! Told you Andy could find something for me to do down there!"

But young Mason was not very happy. He bade his father farewell there in Washington and hardly ever saw him again afterward. He didn't know just what to say to his mother; how to explain matters.

John T. didn't care—he said he'd be back in a year and she'd get along very well for that brief time. Tom wasn't so sure.

He left Washington on July 13th and arrived back in Detroit on the 24th, with a two-day stop in New York where he was fitted for more new clothes. The news was not yet made public. He hurried straight to his home and left instructions that no one should be admitted. The following day, July 25th, Lewis Cass returned to Detroit to wind up his affairs and prepare to move his family to Washington. Mason waited for Cass to make the first move.

Accordingly, Cass summoned reporters from the *Courier* and the *Journal* and the newly established *Free Press*, which made its bow to Detroit in that month of July, 1831. He called the meeting in his own office.

Mason could sense the astonishment of everyone present when Cass casually read through the list of changes. Out of deference to Cass, no one present commented upon the change in Secretaries. Cass said that Mason's appointment was the President's own decision; he added that Mr. Jackson had com-

plete confidence in the young man. It was also his own wish, he said, that every citizen of the Territory offer Mason his cordial and complete support.

Cass then exhibited Mason's enscribed commission, a huge parchment diploma bearing the Great Seal, the prominent signature of Andrew Jackson, and inscribed by the Secretary of State and dated July 12, 1831. He wanted everyone to be satisfied that Mason had been officially appointed and was entitled to assume the authority of the office. When everyone had viewed it in silence, Cass commanded Mason to stand.

There, in the Governor's chamber of Detroit's little brick capitol, Lewis Cass himself administered the oath of office. Stevens T. Mason towered over the squat little figure of Michigan's greatest citizen, who stood now with a Bible in one hand and his other upraised. The official witnesses and invited guests noted how Mason's chin was firm and his shoulders thrown back as he gazed over Cass's rounded head toward the flag of the Territory standing behind the Governor's desk.

"Do you solemnly swear to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, to protect the same against all enemies, to administer this office—"

It was hot in the room. There were beads of moisture on the new Secretary's forehead as he heard it through to the last mumbled word.

"I do."

Cass extended his hand. "Congratulations, Mr. Secretary."

"Thank you, sir."

He was nineteen years, eight months and twenty-eight days old.

CHAPTER V

THE BEARDLESS MOSES

I

SECRETARY MASON sat at home, reading the newspaper. In his hand he held the *Detroit Journal* of July 27, 1831, fresh from the clanking press. The front page was a jumble of tiny one-column advertisements, few of more than one inch in length. All of them were printed in a type so fine that close study of a single column is enough to induce eyestrain today. Stevens T. Mason had no difficulty in reading that particular issue. He saw his own name in heavy capitals, enclosed in a black-bordered box which looked strangely like a funeral notice.

"Late Advices from Washington," he read. "Appointment by the President of *Stevens Thomson Mason* of Kentucky to be Secretary in and for the Territory of Michigan, in place of John T. Mason, resigned."

Below stretched a long column of solid type, unbroken by paragraph indentations. It was full of ponderous words and smouldering with bitterness. News of the ceremony in Cass's office two days before had come in just as the compositors were making up the forms. This attack on Mason looks as if it had been composed by the editor himself, setting it in a type stick as he went along. He didn't have time to write it.

"We had scarcely dismissed the reflections incident to the translation of Governor Cass from this Territory to the War Office when we were startled by the above communication in the *Washington Globe*. We could hardly credit the evidence of our senses, and, in common with the body of our fellow-citizens, who were with one accord assembled on Saturday evening last, in consequence of the intelligence, determined to wait for further information. The boat of Sunday which brought the Secre-

tary-elect dissipated all uncertainty. And now since he has been given the oath of office, there is no doubt."

Charlie Cleland probably wrote it; he had moved back to the *Journal* from the brand-new *Free Press* after a few bitter months. Charlie wore a battered plug hat and chewed scrap tobacco while engaged in his more vicious literary endeavors. Charlie undoubtedly read the foregoing paragraph over, upside down and backward as it lay there in his composing stick, squirted a brown stream in the general direction of the spittoon, and decided that it needed more punch. His next paragraph was more characteristic of him:

"*Be it remembered*, ye Citizens of Michigan, that General Jackson has appointed to be Secretary of your Territory STEVENS THOMSON MASON, late of Kentucky, a young gentleman who, whatever may be his amiable characteristics, will, *if he lives to the month of October next*, be twenty years of age and no more. . . ."

There were fourteen lines, getting more denunciatory as Charlie threw rhetoric to the winds and indulged in pure muck-raking. At the bottom of the page he ran out of room, ending apologetically thus:

"We have not patience nor space for further remarks this week, and will simply commend to our fellow-citizens, in and out of the Territory, the proceedings of confessedly the largest and most respectable and harmonious public meeting that ever convened for any purpose in the city of Detroit."

Mason looked through the rest of the eight-page issue, but there was no report of a mass meeting of it. It must have occurred the day his boat arrived. While he wondered what had happened, there was a determined knock at the door. Five burly men entered, glowered at him, and sat down.

From them he obtained, fact by fact, the story of Detroit's largest spontaneous public meeting. They had been appointed a committee, they said, to come and inquire from him as to the truth of the "charges" brought against him at that time.

Saturday night, before his steamboat had reached the mouth of the Detroit River, people began milling around in the tall

grass of the Campus Martius. Other people came—there must have been more than two thousand. They had been receiving word-of-mouth bulletins on what had happened at Washington, and they were not going to stand for it. A purely natural feeling of anger had been kindled at neighborhood meetings; all of these meetings had spilled over into a monster demonstration in the empty Campus. There were shouts, brandished fists, threats of violence. That situation had all the ingredients of a tar-and-feather mob. The atmosphere of violence grew upon its own momentum, just as the crowd grew as everybody in town hurried thither to see what the excitement was.

Not even the gravest crises in the city's history had brought out a swelling mob like that. Some of the leading citizens of Detroit were there, and they hurriedly endeavored to steer the mob away from violence and turn its demands into an orderly, decorous demonstration of citizens.

Mason was told, as he listened in astonishment, how the crowd had been lulled into a respectful silence by the pleadings of Andrew Mack; how Mack and Oliver Newberry and the others had pleaded for a hearing. They were not acting in defense of Mason, but in defense of Detroit's good name. They were fearful of a riot which would have disastrous consequences.

Spokesmen for the citizens, in the crowd, had nominated Mack and Newberry and these others as a committee to interview Mason and find out what he was going to do. They were to report back, at another mass meeting on Monday, the evening of the day the *Journal* appeared.

Mason looked them over. Andrew Mack, Oliver Newberry, Colonel McKinstry, Shubael Conant and "General" John E. Schwartz, a valiant soldier in the War of 1812. Honored citizens all; stalwart, successful, luxuriantly bearded, the kind of men to whom a crowd will always turn for leadership. They were all die-hard Whigs and good friends of Woodbridge.

Mason, caught without a prepared reply, said the first thing that came into his head. He readily admitted that he was only nineteen years old. But, he said, the President knew that when

he appointed him; he had warned Jackson that trouble was to be expected and that Michigan people would not like the implication of such a selection. He agreed with the committee that it was indeed a puzzle to know what to do. Did they have any suggestions?

"You cannot serve as Secretary in any event," Shubael Conant declared. "The law adopted by the Territorial Council provides that all administrative officers must be voting citizens, own property, have a stake in this community."

"The President," replied Mason, coldly, "is not responsible to the Territorial Council for his appointments. The Senate has the power of confirmation or denial; beyond that, the President is supreme."

That was so, they admitted. Mack said at once that he was favorably impressed and would support Mason. The others were not sure. Newberry intervened with a plea for sportsmanship. He said he didn't think it was a crime to be a minor. Shubael Conant and Colonel McKinstry remained frigid. Mason instantly sniffed a Whig manipulation of the meeting and a pretense of nonpartisanship by appointing a pair of open-minded citizens to the committee who, nevertheless, would be in the minority when its report was drafted.

Word of the dilemma had spread in all directions from Detroit as fast as spade-bearded farmers could larrup their horses down the rutted roads. Indignation meetings appeared at Pontiac, Saginaw and Ann Arbor. The Ann Arbor *Emigrant* lashed out at Mason sarcastically, referring to him as "the stripling." It was a nickname which clung to him.

Mason stayed quietly at home. He made no answer to the fantastic charges and accusations which were buzzing around his head. He did not appear at any of these neighborhood indignation meetings which followed the demonstration in the Campus Martius. He said nothing.

On August 2nd, at the height of this hostility, Mason's next-youngest sister Cornelia died suddenly. Her death provided him with a valid excuse for staying indoors and out of sight. It postponed his inevitable appearance in his father's

erstwhile office at the capitol building. And, while at home, it gave him a welcome opportunity to analyze the situation and come to some decision about it.

A century after her death, Cornelia Mason is just a faded entry in a mammoth family Bible which once belonged to Mary Armistead Mason and had become John T.'s index of genealogy. Two parallel dates: "born—died." There is no likeness of her; no record of why she died or any scrap of illustrative anecdote about her. She was six years old, a confused little girl born into a distraught household at Mount Sterling who never knew why her family was different from other families. Her only contribution to the saga of her brilliant brother was the morbid fact that her death was a boon to him. It gave him a chance to make a series of quick, bold moves which otherwise would have been spotlighted with hostile publicity.

While family arrangements for Cornelia's funeral were in progress, Mason was seated at his polished rosewood desk, writing. He straightway notified Andrew Jackson in a personal letter that the fat was in the fire just as all hands had predicted, but that it was nothing serious. He came directly to the point and wrapped up the situation in a few deft phrases.

"Upon my arrival at Detroit I found that news of my appointment had preceded me by a day, and that certain persons had gotten up an excitement against my continuance . . . the motives which originated this course are obvious. . . . I have been beset by a sort of inquisitorial scrutiny, and finding nothing to rest upon but the fact of my minority, I have been asked to relinquish the office. To this I replied that having received my appointment from you, no power but that of the constituted authority would drive me from my place, nor would I yield it except to your wishes."

He reported that the whole course of the demonstration led him to believe that it was a Whig trick to embarrass Jackson's administration. He said that Jackson himself had never been noted for yielding to intimidation and that he had no intention of yielding to it. In his opinion, Mason continued, the whole thing was a build-up to force Jackson to appoint a

Governor. "My opponents," he wrote, "made their objections as if I was in fact appointed Governor and would continue to discharge his duties for years. This difficulty, I trust, will soon be removed."

While he wrote, Mason meditated upon Jackson's strange whims. He remembered the old man's last words to him at Washington—a fatherly gush of affectionate praise. "Let me hear from you frequently," Jackson had urged. Mason, thoughtfully brushing the tip of his long quill pen against his beardless cheek, added a personal paragraph:

"I write you this as due the confidence you have reposed in me; and especially due to the wish (equal to a command with me) to hear from me frequently. *I see my way clear.* I feel a confidence in maintaining myself against all opposition if sustained by you, of which I feel a perfect assurance."

John T. could never have written such a letter. At any rate, he never did. Beardless youth though he might be called, stripling though he was in print, Mason's mind was here shown as the brilliant, analytical mind of a mature judge of popular trends. In his estimation of the politically inspired mass meetings Mason was thoroughly correct. They drafted a bundle of protesting resolutions, forwarded them to the White House, and vanished. Opposition was kept alive by the Woodbridge faction, but not for very long.

Mason, even before he had assumed his office, made a bid for popular support which infuriated Woodbridge. After having dispatched his letter to Jackson, Mason straightway wrote another. This he sent to the *Journal*, the sullen Whig mouthpiece which regarded him as an imp of His Satanic Majesty by special appointment. Mason cleverly changed his whole literary style, donned the humble guise of a confused but well-meaning youth and threw himself upon the fair-mindedness of the people. The letter appeared in the issue of August 3rd, the day after Cornelia's death.

"To the public: It is now more than a year since my father emigrated to this place. . . ."

Either Mason was too naive to realize what he was doing,

or he was too clever to miss a golden opportunity to put his case before the public at a time when everyone would see it. He was the sensation of the Territory. Settlers talked of nothing else. He knew he would have an audience.

He went into considerable detail about his father's troubles acting as Governor in the absence of Cass; recounted how he had been a sort of clerk to his father and to Cass, had learned the job, had come to feel that he was a citizen of Michigan and wanted to be regarded as such. Then, he continued, his father was suddenly called away to the South, saddling "his only son and oldest child with the responsibility for the well-being of a family of seven females (written before Cornelia's death) and a large household. To their comfort it is well-known that even the petty emoluments of this office are essential."

In other words, the family was left fatherless and the boy had to go to work. So he had been appointed Secretary and Acting Governor, and the salary was far from petty as living costs were figured a century ago. It was a very comfortable living. To play down that fact, Mason referred to it as a "petty emolument," sending settlers scurrying for the dictionary.

He played down his own ability just as consciously. "That there are many in the Territory of higher qualifications, upon whom the appointment might have been conferred, is broadly and fully conceded." He brought up all the objections, one at a time, and answered them. He might have to exercise the powers of Governor occasionally. Suppose the reader himself were suddenly thrust into that situation. What would he do? If he were sensible he'd ask advice. He'd consult with the wisest and best minds of the Territory. And that was just what Mason proposed to do. A young man with the boldness to act, and with capable advisers to guide him, was the best kind of administrator. "The oldest," remarked Mason, "ask advice. The difference is, youth yields to advice; age seldom or never."

This letter seemed to catch the public fancy. It was widely reprinted all over the United States. In Detroit the *Free Press*

reprinted it verbatim without comment, but no comment was needed to impress Mason's personality upon the people of Detroit. Grumpily, the *Journal* admitted on August 10th that Mason might have something there. That point about youth yielding to advice, the *Journal* thought, might be construed to mean that Mason had employed a ghost writer to turn out that communication. It seemed a little more effective than a "stripling" could produce; perhaps his father had helped him with it. Mason might have given the final draft a few touches, remarked the newspaper. The *Advertiser*, losing circulation rapidly since the advent of the *Free Press*, put in a whack of its own. But the best quip of the week came from Sheldon McKnight in the *Free Press*; a wit somewhat resembling that great newspaper's own Malcolm Bingay of today. McKnight was intrigued by Mason's frank statement that he needed the job because he had a family to support. "To decline a lucrative post tendered him without solicitation," commented McKnight, "would have argued a degree of discretion very uncommon at the tender age of the *Secretary and Acting Governor*."

Immediately, Mason emerged from the confines of his house and began making personal calls upon Detroit's influential people. He selected them carefully, after a close estimation of the weight a good opinion from each would carry. He saddled a horse and rode to the village of Mt. Clemens to visit its founder and chief citizen, Judge Christian Clemens. That worthy was thunderstruck upon discovering his visitor's identity. The Judge had inadvertently acted as a committee member during one of the local indignation meetings; whereupon Mason asked him point-blank just what the Judge had against him. Judge Clemens never expected to be investigated merely for serving on a committee, and he was deeply impressed by Mason's open bid for help. There was a long, friendly interview. As he mounted his horse to leave, the Judge came out to the road to see him off. "Go to it, boy," he smiled. "Do what is right. Up here, we'll back you."

"That's fine of you, sir," bowed Mason. "I am grateful."

Mason procured copies of all the resolutions drafted by these meetings. He went over the names, and listed every known fact about those men. He discovered a curious thing. All these meetings had the appearance of spontaneous origin, and were attended by many registered Democrats who sincerely opposed Masons appointment. But the members of the resolutions committees were all Whigs. The fine Italian hand of Woodbridge.

Signatures of men not known to be part of Woodbridge's machine meant opportunity for Mason. He personally visited them all, sitting down with them in their parlors, frankly admitting that he didn't know everything, openly asking for support and help. He made firm friendships which lasted as long as he lived. Even conservative Whig families like the Newberrys, the Thomas Palmers, the Andrew Macks and the Benjamin Witherells were won over by Mason's personal charm and his prolific fund of compliments. He told them he was nothing, but they were mighty. He asked their help. There was really no way to refuse it.

Within a few days this campaign began bearing fruit. Opposition to Mason in Detroit collapsed like a windbag, which, in fact, it was. His campaign to popularize himself had been a necessity, at first. But he made such progress with it that he never entirely abandoned it. He was always eager to convert a possible enemy. He rode many weary miles, for years, for the satisfaction of debating in person with some person who had been quoted as disparaging him. Usually he won, and the world loves a winner.

Andrew Jackson was a man to whom indecision was a vice. Mason was notified by letter that Jackson had given thought to his plight and had answered his request. On August 6th, probably the same day that Jackson received Mason's personal message, he appointed a new Governor for the Territory of Michigan. The official announcement in the *Washington Globe* appeared the same week. Jackson had appointed George B. Porter of Pennsylvania. Mason didn't know him; no one in Detroit had heard of him.

The papers of August 17th carried news of the appointment clipped from the *Globe*, but Porter didn't arrive. On September 19th he leisurely stepped ashore from the antique *Henry Clay* and asked someone for a carriage. There was not a public conveyance in Detroit. People walked, a form of locomotion Porter found distasteful.

He was just another deserving Democrat like John T. He had never achieved anything in his life which could have justified such an appointment. He, like John T., had been selected by pressure of Jackson's clique, because of his famous name and his family's prominence in its own state.

He came from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the heart of the rich old Dutch farming country. His father had been General Andrew Porter, able commander in the Revolutionary War. His brother, David Rittenhouse Porter, current governor of Pennsylvania, was one of Philadelphia's great gentlemen. Outside of those connections George Porter himself had nothing to recommend him. It became evident to Mason that Jackson had appointed a stooge, a name to carry the nominal title of Governor while Mason worked without interruption.

Porter was tall, exquisitely tailored, very wealthy, inclined to snobbishness and described by Fuller as a *bon vivant* thrust into a frontier town. On his great estate near Lancaster, Porter raised blooded stock and took prizes at county fairs with it. He brought a boatload of pedigreed stud stock with him, and was amazed to find that Michigan regarded horses purely as a means of pulling or carrying something useful.

When he and his lady had walked through Detroit's teeming streets to the sanctuary of the Mansion House, Porter languidly went out and bought a house. The only one available that week was the historic Hull residence on Jefferson and Randolph, the first brick house in Detroit built after the fire of 1805. It was in a bad state of repair but because it had been so closely bound up with Detroit's history the owners asked a fancy price. Porter paid it. He attempted to live in it for about two weeks, but found that it would be very expensive to change it enough to suit his taste.

His chief interest in Detroit was its possibility of profit through real-estate speculation. He cast about, and located a 350-acre farm on the river a few miles below the city. This he bought for six thousand dollars, and immediately subdivided and sold all but seventy-five acres of it for enough so that his river-front estate actually cost him nothing. He moved his blooded horses out there and planned to build an imposing mansion, the finest and most expensive in Michigan. Architects were consulted. Plans were hurriedly sketched for his approval. Materials were purchased. Then George Porter and his lady sailed away again, and did not come back to Michigan until the following June.

On his seventy-five-acre estate, barns were built and preparations made for the construction of the mansion. The tract stretched along the river from what is now 22nd Street to 25th Street. It was to be all lawn then. The city was very proud of it and Porter was regarded as the ideal figure of a Governor. He had long wavy sideburns which framed his thin face and gave it impressive dignity and maturity—advantages that Mason obviously lacked.

Because he had an atmosphere of solid citizenry about him, Michigan tolerated more breaches of official duty from George Porter than from any public official in the city or Territory. He was annoyed at his appointment but could not gracefully refuse it. Thus he stayed away as long as possible, returned for a few weeks and left again. His salary went on—a subject of considerable newspaper speculation in December, 1831, after he had held office five months and not served more than three weeks.

In February, 1832, the Senate dutifully confirmed Porter's appointment and thus brought him to the attention of Detroit papers again. In the *Journal* of February 22, 1832, Charlie Cleland was in good form:

"A letter has been received in the city which states that the nomination of Gov. Porter has been confirmed by the Senate. It is, if we mistake not, about six months since this gentleman received his appointment as Governor of the Territory of

Michigan, of which he has spent among us some six weeks or thereabouts; it certainly takes him a long while to look after his *one client* in Pennsylvania. Must be a case in *chancery*. We wonder if his pay goes on regularly meanwhile?"

Behind this midwinter appearance of quiet, Mason was working hard to build a wider tolerance of himself among Michigan leaders. During the winter he had very little to say, and was seen in public only infrequently. In the fall he had tried to rent his Congress Street house and had moved to a new three-story brick dwelling at 303 East Jefferson, a newly opened section of the Baubien farm. The details of arranging for the purchase of this house had to be arranged by correspondence with his father, because even though he might be Acting Governor, Mason was too young to sign a land contract and a mortgage.

Every Sunday he attended the graceful little Episcopal Church of St. Paul's at Woodward and Larned, escorting his tiny, heavily veiled mother. No roistering in the public taverns, no moody drinking. In his office he declined to take any position on administrative matters on the ground that the Council was not in session and he had not enough experience to initiate a program.

He was afraid—afraid of Woodbridge. Any little embarrassing incident would have been built up into something that would have alienated support from him in Washington and switched a few votes to the Woodbridge bloc in the Senate. His own confirmation motion was due soon. Well he knew that the Whigs in general were going to do everything possible to block it. Mason, as a popular character, was receiving too much friendly newspaper space to suit the Whig Party nationally. They realized that a new national personality was being built up; that Mason's hold on the public fancy was bound to help Jackson and the Democrats solidify their gains made in the election of 1828. The year 1832 being another presidential year, Whigs rallied to Woodbridge's support in an effort to discredit young Mason in the Senate.

Letters were moving back and forth between Washington and Detroit all winter. Uncle William T. Barry left his office

in the Post Office Department and was seen deep in conferences on Capitol Hill. Colonel Richard Johnson of Kentucky was probably the second-biggest popular hero of the War of 1812 next to Jackson himself, and he threw his great influence to the side of the young Secretary. Jackson cracked the whip over his top-heavy Senate majority in no uncertain terms. In May, Stevens T. Mason was triumphantly confirmed. Woodbridge's sunken cheeks dropped lower, but his bright eyes gleamed more icy than ever.

Woodbridge had reason to add an intense personal bitterness toward Mason to his obvious political opposition. Just as the Senate battle over confirmation votes was at its hottest, in February, Jackson removed Woodbridge from his sinecure on the Territorial Supreme Court. All three Whig appointees, Solomon Sibley and Henry Chipman too, were ousted by direct Presidential edict. Woodbridge took this inevitable move as a direct affront by the President at Mason's demand. Immediately thereafter, what was left of the Whig opposition to Mason in the Senate disappeared. This only established Woodbridge's suspicions as facts in his hate-filled mind. He thought that young Mason had outwitted him.

For the first time in more than twenty years, Woodbridge was off the public payroll. He was given a consolation dinner by the Detroit Bar Association, a sort of testimonial. Mason was present, and delivered a brief pep talk on "party spirit" which launched the program on a note of optimism. Then Woodbridge arose. In his characteristic attitude of self-pity he almost wept over his plight and referred to it as a "contemptuous ejection". He sneered at the calibre of Jackson's appointees. He begged for sympathy. He publicly asked himself what he had ever done to deserve this. It was all very impressive and some of the lawyers were in tears. They presented him with a resolution saying that he had their undying admiration.

That was too much for Ebenezer Reed, a vitriolic newspaperman who was present. Reed had lost one good job when the *Gazette* mysteriously burned just after it had exposed Woodbridge. Reed still believed that Woodbridge had ordered

it destroyed. Reed had seen Woodbridge send another Detroit newspaperman to jail because he asked some pointed questions about the bitter jurist's official conduct. And now Reed sat in the Mansion House dining room listening to Woodbridge feel sorry for himself.

In a letter to the *Free Press* appropriately signed "Consistency", Reed let him have both barrels. "Can it be possible that all this honeyed adulation is sincere? Did the reformed judges really look serious when they performed their parts in this melodrama? Mr. Woodbridge said that he hoped to find something in his official life which would make him a wiser and a better man. Had he been a wise man, and consequently a better one, he would never have been a judge on the bench or he would still have been there, secure in the affections and respect of the people. But he has chosen to depend upon the *semblance* of virtue rather than its *substance*. His fate is like all others who have based the fabric of their reputations upon mere shadow."

The readers applauded Reed. Other letters showered into the newspaper offices, containing anecdotes about Woodbridge's judicial highhandedness. Some of them were written by the selfsame lawyers who signed the resolution of admiration. They were enough to impeach him, had Woodbridge still occupied the bench. But he was a private citizen again and could send no one to jail. For some two weeks the newspapers of Detroit indulged in an orgy of Woodbridge-baiting which indirectly helped to swing even Whig readers away from him and toward Mason. The rivalry between the vengeful old man and the aggressive youth had reached a point where it was one of the spectacles of the community. It was out in the open now, and involuntarily the community began to take sides.

In such a battle, personal popularity decides the issue. Woodbridge could never win that sort of campaign. Mason couldn't lose; people liked him on sight and seem to have adopted him as a sort of community mascot. They urged him on.

His only public battles with Woodbridge were fought in

the columns of the newspapers, when he occasionally rapped something the Whigs had done. These he signed "Aristides", hiding behind that famed Greek's scanty tunic because he didn't want to declare open war by signing his own name.

2

War is a grim business, except sometimes in retrospect. When the spectre of an armed enemy begins casting a shadow over a land wrung from nature by human sweat and courage, homes are dark with fear. The very difficulty of defending such sparsely settled farms gave the spectre a heart-stopping solidity for people whose nearest neighbors were miles away.

The oft-repeated bromide concerning political bedfellows could have referred to no more strangely matched pair then Stevens T. Mason and one Ma-ka-tai-she-kia-kiak, a Sac Indian with a shaved skull and one belligerent black topknot sticking straight up from the top of it. The Indian rudely pushed the political conventions out of the public mind and replaced Jackson as the most hated man in the country. With him he dragged Mason into more publicity. But Mason liked it and cultivated newspapermen all the more.

This Indian was living quietly on a reservation on the west bank of the Mississippi River opposite upper Illinois. His only trouble was a consuming curiosity about what was on the other side of the river. Early in 1832 he gathered some reckless braves from several neighborhood tribes and crossed the river to explore the new settlements.

The settlers recognized him immediately as the notorious Black Hawk, a renegade who had never been a tribal chief in his life but who was a veteran at stirring up trouble. Black Hawk was sixty-five years of age in 1832; copper face deeply lined, scars all over his skin, very erect in bearing and defiant in manner. He was a veteran of the British payroll in the War of 1812; he took a few scalps in the River Raisin massacre and at Malden. He survived the disaster of the Battle of the Thames when Chief Tecumseh was killed. He had been

banished to this reservation and told to stay there. He should have been hanged.

In one of his first raids on the border settlements he stole a blue broadcloth coat with bright brass buttons, and a pair of doeskin trousers. This outfit made him look like a sunburned German burgher at a *Turnverein* meeting, especially after he had added a tall beaver hat and began wearing ruffled shirts. The brass buttons on his coat were visible through rifle sights at quite amazing ranges, which is perhaps the explanation for the odd fact that Black Hawk did no fighting in the Black Hawk War, but acted as a sort of generalissimo who got the others into trouble.

Throughout the vast plains of the Middle West, ranging a thousand miles through forests and raw log settlements, the name Black Hawk spread terror. People visualized him as a half-naked savage galloping furiously on a painted pony, brandishing a rifle and yipping war cries at the head of all the downtrodden Indians in the West. They thought he was a sort of George Washington of the Indians, leading them to bloody revolution.

The times cried aloud for a tabloid, which would shortly have debunked him as the half-pint Villa which history says he was. People had no way of following a sudden outbreak with accuracy. They were afraid of the potential danger of a situation dramatized and typified by Black Hawk. Their runaway imaginations produced the phenomenon we call the Black Hawk War. It had all the future stars of the following two decades inconspicuously acting as extras in its cast. Lincoln was about Mason's age; he had just turned twenty-one and was trying to drill a voluntary company at New Salem. Jefferson Davis, Zachary Taylor, senators, ministers took part—everybody but able soldiers.

The military situation was simple. This was not a war, implying an organized army with its supplies and reserves, threatening a given point with a known objective. It was a series of border raids on the settlements of northern Illinois. The remedy was a regiment of cavalry.

But there was no cavalry ready to defend the threatened points. The settlers were attacked in typical Indian fashion, at night, as they slept. Black Hawk burned a line of cabins, massacred and pillaged in savage fury. Then he and his men vanished, to reappear at some other point the following night. Long wagon trains of refugees began appearing at the stockaded forts up and down the river. There, volunteers grabbed muskets and allowed that they would stuff Black Hawk and mount him in the local courthouse as a warning to obstreperous redskins henceforth.

But a few dozen of the intrepid settlers chanced upon several hundred aroused redskins. They were massacred. Once more, white scalps dripped red at the belts of painted Indians. The few survivors galloped like mad to the nearest fort, where they bellowed at the top of their lungs that all the Indians in the world were on the warpath. Settlements in the path of this sweeping raid were evacuated overnight, producing creaking processions of wagons which Black Hawk found loaded with loot and completely helpless.

Murdered men, corpses of ravished women and mangled babes, blackened ashes of newly built cabins left a trail behind Black Hawk's redskins. With every telling, the horror grew. The Governor of Illinois appealed for help to the Federal government. Jackson ordered all states to raise troops; asked governors of states and territories to sign proclamations of war at once. The army was mobilized. General Winfield Scott got up off his polished oak chair and took the field. Mason was one of the first governors to receive notice that he must furnish troops. He became suddenly aware that he was Acting Governor, that he had the power of commander-in-chief of the troops to be raised, and that he was a pretty important fellow.

Messages arrived in Detroit full of hysteria, trying to describe the outrages committed by the bloody Black Hawk. The terror was real; the reports were even more terrible than the facts. Local companies of guards were formed in the Wisconsin portion of Michigan Territory to protect the valuable lead mines against the Winnebagoes, who were reported to

have joined Black Hawk. In Michigan the Pottawatomi were undecided as to whether to go on the warpath with him or not. The southern settled area immediately demanded protection. Mason had to provide it.

He proclaimed a state of emergency and ordered out the volunteers who were asked to respond. The few troops of the regular army in Michigan were mobilized at the same time by orders from the War Department. There were not very many; mostly staff officers assisting in the demolition and auction of Fort Shelby, and two companies of infantry quartered on the edge of town. General Hugh Brady was ordered to assume command of this force and proceed to the mouth of the Chicago River, to the village of the same name.

Brady left at once, accompanied by his aide, Lieutenant Elector Backus, and the troops. After they had gone, Mason's problem centered around the Territorial Militia. In command was a crusty old curmudgeon named General John R. Williams, a leading citizen of Detroit, amassing wealth from trade with the flow of settlers and conservatism from his close friendship with Woodbridge. He had long been contemptuous of Mason.

He said he wouldn't move until he had been duly notified by the Governor. And he made it plain that young Mason was not the Governor and that he had no *ex officio* power as commanding officer. Mason, thus rudely awakened from placid routine, was confronted with a challenge.

It was plainly his responsibility to see that Michigan men were rushed to the aid of Illinois with all possible speed. Faced with the irascible old General's indifference to his proclamation, the matter became a test of strength to see just what Mason was going to do about it.

On May 22nd he issued an official proclamation directing General Williams to "raise such a number of volunteers as in his opinion might be necessary." The document ordered General Williams to proceed with this force to Jonesville, a settlement far down on the Chicago turnpike. There he was directed to rendezvous with General Joseph Brown's force of volunteers

which was coming from the other outlying areas of the Territory. The order named General Brown as head of the unit.

To this order he affixed the Territorial Seal and rushed it downtown to the Williams residence at the juncture of Woodward and a curved alley which was subsequently named John R.'s Street, now John R. There was just a chilly silence from within the mansion. The following day Mason heard indirectly that the General had remarked that volunteers were not coming in fast enough to make such a force practical, and that he didn't see any use in it. Mason immediately issued an executive order to General Williams as Acting Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the militia, a power which the General said he did not rightfully have. Anyhow, Mason thus exercised the powers of the office by calling out all units of the Territorial militia.

The officers and men of the militia seemed to regard Mason as the boss. They obeyed the order. He sent a copy of it to Williams with this letter:

"You cannot but be aware that delay is only calculated to give rise to false and unfounded reports. These may possibly have an injurious effect upon emigration to this Territory. It is expected that you will use every exertion to meet General Brown forthwith and that you will not return to this place until every shadow of danger from hostile Indians on the frontier has been removed."

Mason got to all the Detroit newspapers with his copy of the order and the accompanying letter first, before the ruffled General could think of anything to say. General Williams had been one of the founders of the *Free Press* only two years before. He could not stomach the thought, perhaps, of being lampooned in his own publication. The tub-thumping Charlie Cleland, who had no love for Williams, had gone to work for the *Free Press* that month. And Williams, being a pompous man, feared ridicule.

Reluctantly he penned an order, dated May 23rd, calling out one regiment of infantry, a battalion of mounted riflemen

and the ornamental Oakland County Scouts, Detroit's ceremonial fancy-drill company. They were to assemble at Ten Eyck's, a tavern on the Chicago turnpike which was the genesis of today's city of Dearborn. The order specified one P. M., May 25th, which was Sunday and would interrupt everybody's Sunday dinner. The entire command was there on time and the General, perforce, had to go.

As the small force trudged along the dusty clay road it accumulated volunteers from every hamlet and settlement. Volunteers were not as slow in responding to Mason's proclamation as General Williams had believed. Five more companies of volunteers met the force at Jonesville and were absorbed into Williams' 8th Michigan Regiment. They came from Clinton, Palmyra, Adrian, Blissfield and Tecumseh, towns in a sort of triangle in the extreme southeastern corner of the State.

General Brown arrived in Jonesville with his regiment on time, completing the rendezvous the way Mason had planned it. But while the force rested, General Williams had to ride back toward Detroit to muster in more volunteers at Saline, who loudly protested at being left behind. The spirit of high adventure was burning in these boys' hearts. They were the typical American boys who sprang to arms overnight; they sang and wrestled and loaded themselves down with all sorts of old-fashioned weapons which they thought might come in handy. They were going to fight Indians. They were going to have a whale of a time.

The only adventure they had was a long dusty march home again. Mason had no more than drawn a sigh of relief at General Williams' departure than a breathless messenger galloped up to the little brick capitol building, tethered his horse to the hitching rail outside and hurried to Mason's office. He bore a letter from the commander of the regular army forces at Chicago, who stated that Scott had sent a large detachment of infantry and cavalry overland to Fort Dearborn, by way of the lake and the road across Ohio and Indiana. They had arrived, he said, and they were strong enough to handle the situation easily. Michigan troops should be called home at once.

In a daze, Mason penned a letter to General Williams and sent it after him by another messenger. The letter caught up with him at Saline, where he was still mustering in the volunteers who were said not to be coming in very fast. He had not even had time to start in the direction of Chicago.

There was a good deal of disappointment in Detroit at this turn of events. Another public meeting popped up, composed apparently of relatives and friends of the soldiers who demanded that they be allowed to fight. Detroit seems to have been as volatile as a labor union; every unwelcome announcement precipitated a crowd of noisy people who howled for something to be done about it. They violently denounced anyone who might be held up as a scapegoat. While this meeting was denouncing Mason, another letter arrived and was read at the scene. This was written by General Williams, and addressed, not to Mason, his immediate superior, but to Cass, at Washington. "The orders of the acting Governor are inconsistent, contradictory and incompatible with military rules!"

The crowd roared. Mason sent word to it, answering in kind:

"Should we have to march again from this quarter, the gentlemen who fight the battles of the country *at public meetings* will be the first to go, if it can be effected."

The crowd laughed, and the Black Hawk War was over. The weary troops staggered back into town and were dismissed. General Williams and General Brown rode on to Chicago without them, where the few dozen inhabitants of that swampy village gave them a rousing welcome for their well-meant gesture. Mason and his fight with Williams became Michigan's only contribution to the war. There were some twenty big-city dailies in the country which regarded Mason as good copy and gleefully built him up as a sort of political David, entering battle against the Whig Goliaths armed only with his nimble brain and aggressive boldness of action. Every little incident wherein he set his enemies back on their haunches got an abnormal amount of newspaper space. The country was aching for someone to lionize. It was a country in another cen-

tury, ninety-five years before Lindbergh, but people were just about the same.

The Black Hawk War gave him victory in a preliminary skirmish and prepared a place of command for him. He was forced by Governor Porter's absence to lead Michigan people through one of their blackest hours. Hardly had the exhausted troops returned home when another war began—a war a hundred times more deadly than anything Black Hawk could attempt. Mason found Michigan people ready to accept him, and to follow him. When he saw what he was facing he plunged in and fought. They loved him for it.

3

The good ship *Henry Clay* was a wheezing old side-wheeler ruggedly built along the general lines of a garbage barge. Down in its vitals was a thumping little steam engine which banged and bumped happily along, day and night, while its rickety cabin abaft its tall smokestack squeaked and shivered. Jammed into its cell-like staterooms were people of consequence. Porter had sailed on it; so had John T. and thousands of other notables. For fifteen years it had been pounding over Lake Erie from Buffalo to the Merchants' Wharf at the foot of Bates Street, Detroit. The passage was advertised as "fast express and mail schedule"; two and a half days. If a sudden wind sprang up, whipping the shallow lake into a series of sickening ground swells, the ship put in at some harbor and waited.

Sometime during June, 1832, the *Henry Clay* joined the army. An officer was sent to Buffalo to arrange for four steamboats to move more troops to Chicago, there to act as reserves if the initial force had trouble cornering Black Hawk. In addition to the *Henry Clay*, this officer chartered another antique, even older and more decrepit. She was the *Superior*, second steamboat on Lake Erie and the proud possessor of the little potbellied engine which had been salvaged from the wreck of the historic *Walk-in-the-Water*. Both boats should have

been in some museum instead of acting as troop transports.

The other two were newer and better; the *Sheldon Thompson* and the *William Penn*. Early in July all of these were filled with infantrymen from Fortress Monroe, Virginia, and weighed anchor for Detroit. They arrived in the midst of a Fourth of July celebration. They disgorged their troops, and uniforms mingled with homespun and gingham as the populace made merry at the traditional barbecue and picnic at the Cass farm.

At nightfall, the troops were recalled to the transports, which were tied up at the Merchants' Wharf dock. That night, two cases of Asiatic cholera were discovered among the men on the *Henry Clay*. The army doctor immediately identified the disease. He fled ashore and sought refuge in a hotel, on the plea of a sudden illness. Aboard the old vessel, panic appeared.

Cholera swept through its crowded holds like incendiary fire. One of the victims died in convulsions before daybreak; by the time two Detroit doctors could be rushed aboard there were sixteen cases. The physicians, Dr. Randall S. Rice and Dr. John L. Whiting, shouted at the terrorized soldiers to lift those men out of the crowded steerage and get them ashore—anywhere. They were carried into a dockside warehouse leased by the army quartermaster's department, but eleven of them died rapidly and the *Henry Clay* had become a floating death trap.

The busy treadmill of routine life in Detroit stopped, paralyzed. Silent groups of people came and stared down at the row of lifeless bodies, bloated and discolored, as they lay on the ground outside the warehouse. The steamboats had all been ordered away from the dock and were chuffing up the river in a smoky line, ordered to anchor in the lee of Hog Island (Belle Isle) until the curse could be controlled. But orders were switched in the excitement, and new papers were carried aboard ordering the whole flotilla to proceed around the chain of lakes to Chicago. No steamship had ever churned the waters of Lake Michigan; the skippers had never heard of Chicago and didn't know how to get there. But they started.

The *Henry Clay* got as far as Fort Gratiot, a few miles up the course on the shore of Lake St. Clair. Then it was forced to put in for wood and water.

"Conditions," testified Captain Walker, the skipper, "were indescribable. As soon as we touched the dock, every man who could move jumped ashore, hoping to escape from a scene so terrifying and appalling. Some fled to the fields, some to the woods, some just lay down on the dock and died. Bodies were found in the adjoining fields for months afterward. We do not know how many victims perished in that way."

The *William Penn* had to turn back. A camp for its stricken men was set up at Springwells, and about half of them survived. Of the 850 men aboard the four vessels, less than 200 ever reached Chicago.

Even before the *Henry Clay* had left the dock, cholera had struck Detroit like a lash of a whip. The first two victims died July 6th; thereafter cholera swept across the entire city within two more days.

Mason offered the unused top floor of the capitol building as a temporary hospital, but medical care could not help much. On July 18th there were twenty-eight deaths and on the 20th the toll was thirty-two. Normal life had come to a complete standstill.

Stores were closed, offices left vacant, warehouses abandoned with wide-open doors and none to pilfer them. Every citizen who had a wagon which would hold his family and a few physical necessities fled the city by any road that was open. The people, fear-crazed, who could not leave, locked their doors and shuttered up their windows as if cholera were some kind of burglar. Over the city hung a blanket of eye-stinging black smoke, rising from pitch-pine knots burned in alleys and on street corners, which some unremembered healer thought was a preventative of contagion.

Church bells tolled almost continuously, solemnly announcing the passing of a beloved communicant. At night, in this pall of smoke, carts would be drawn through the streets, accompanied by bell-ringing wardens, calling: "Bring out your dead! Bring

out your dead!" Then doors would cautiously open and in the dim yellow glow of whale-oil lamps dark shadows would slowly move across the wall. Loved ones who fell victims to the dread scourge were carried out and dumped into these carts as unceremoniously as so much cordwood. They were buried in deep ditches dug in the commons, unmarked and unseparated.

Cholera struck with such swiftness that it was like the attack of an unseen army. A man helping to load the death carts would be seen to put his hand to his spinning head to steady himself, then sway and fall. In an hour he would be dead. Emily Mason sat out on the front steps talking to a young man just arrived from Boston. Granny Peg brought the youth a mint julep, which she said she had heard was a preventative of cholera. The handsome young Bostonian said he thought there was no more pleasant way to ward off cholera than through the medium of a julep. A few hours later he was dead. Granny Peg died the next day, in Emily's arms. The household was hungry; no one had the courage to try to find a grocery store that was open and the valiant old Guinea negress set out alone. She came back with food, and her loyalty cost her her life.

Throughout the city there were courageous souls who joined Mason in organizing a strong fight against the scourge. They flung caution to the winds. They drove the wagons which carried stricken people from disease-free homes to the impromptu hospital in the capitol building. They distributed supplies and food and medicine. They were everywhere, sending help to those who could be saved, defiantly ignoring the ever-present threat of unseen death to bring a little aid to total strangers who still had a chance for life.

Women from fine old French families worked side by side with sailors from Lake Erie freight scows. The Desnoyers, the Dequindres, the Campeaus, the Beaubiens, and many more, organized a quarantine camp in a Beaubien lot just east of the Campus. Father Martin Kundig and the Sisters of Mercy labored frantically, without rest, dosing calomel and ipecac into the mouths of fever-stricken strangers, bathing them, wrapping them in clean sheets after the recurrent seizures of diar-

rhoea which were among the first definite symptoms of the disease.

Word came that Father Gabriel Richard had been stricken after having gone vigorously into a disease-ridden shack near the Campus to administer extreme unction to someone who had called for a priest. But the valiant crew couldn't stop then to mourn. Father Richard died, Michigan's most venerated sacrifice to the scourge. Every Catholic in Detroit, instead of weeping, raised his head and plunged deeper into the filth and misery to save what he could. Father Richard's spirit is part of Detroit to this day. After a month of terror, when Detroit had lost a tenth of its population and the scourge had run its course, Detroit realized the magnitude of its loss. Father Richard and Cadillac were the real builders of the city.

Father Richard designed and partly built the cathedral of St. Ann's. He and a protestant minister named Reverend John Montieth founded the forerunner of the University of Michigan, where the versatile priest was professor of four different subjects. He was the first delegate from Michigan Territory to the national Congress, the only Catholic priest who has ever been elected to that body. He did about everything that needed doing, and it was from Father Gabriel Richard, a vigorous Franciscan monk in a brown robe and sandals, that Mason obtained the beginnings of his enduring educational system.

Mason interrupted his debut as Acting Governor before the Territorial Council when the disease struck. He had just delivered a nicely phrased annual message to that body and outlined two possible legislative movements when he saw that the time for speeches was past. In the message he made a plea for a public school system and subconsciously laid the foundation for continuing Father Richard's brilliant beginnings. But the message is forgotten today, a breath of pure air in a stinking monsoon of disease.

When the full force of cholera's impact was felt suddenly on July 18th, Mason was confronted with the first of the inevitable signs of breakdown in public authority. In times of

panic it is every man for himself, and no one is more prone to act with utter independence than a homesteader. It was vital to Detroit's safety that the roads be kept open, in order that supplies of medicines and food for the besieged inhabitants might arrive in time to do some good. But the terrorized villagers on the roads leading out of the city immediately erected blockades and guarded them with guns. Nobody knew what to do. If anything were to be done, Mason would have to do it himself.

He left his own family to get along as best it could, and took to the roads. He was everywhere, galloping far out into the oak openings where only isolated cabins had been located. He turned up as far west as Niles, a hundred and eighty miles from Detroit, almost across the State.

Pontiac, on the north, called out its company of militia and stopped by force any attempt to enter that village from Detroit. Ypsilanti posted armed guards at its barrier across the Chicago turnpike. One of the hotheads of this band shot the lead horse of the mail coach on July 10th as its driver sat on his box arguing about the necessity for the mail to go through.

Mason himself was caught in this speed trap at Ypsilanti. On July 14th he came galloping along the turnpike, his satin-lined cloak flying out behind his shoulders, stovepipe hat crammed down upon his wavy hair, a long Virginia cigar clamped between his teeth. He was brought up short at the barrier. He demanded that he be allowed to pass, and a deputy sheriff named Eliphalet Turner brusquely told him that if he did, he would be shot.

The barrier was the object of Mason's visit. He looked down into the barrel of Turner's musket, wheeled his horse and started away. But he detoured around the barrier and sought out an Ypsilanti resident named Samuel Pettibone, asking for directions on unfrequented roads to reach Mottville, where Mason was to distribute emergency proclamations to the entire southern tier of counties. Pettibone got him safely out of town and Mason was well away, riding hard, when Turner suddenly appeared out of nowhere and overtook him on a

faster horse. The deputy grabbed the bridle and lugged the Acting Governor back to town under arrest. In the courtroom of the local justice of the peace Mason angrily revealed his identity. Then he was given permission to pass. Livid with rage, he turned to Turner and shouted:

"I haven't time to take up the matter now, but you'll hear from me again!"

Turner's eagerness to make a pinch cost him his job, and his boss's job as well. Mason had no more than reached Detroit again from Mottville than Eliphalet Turner and Sheriff Worthington were both summarily removed from office by an executive order. Mason had found that Governor Porter had chosen this particular moment of chaos to return to his so-called duties. The only thing Porter did during the cholera epidemic was to sign this removal order. But Mason was everywhere at once, appearing suddenly in some barricaded village like a ghost, gathering sheriffs and justices to enforce his proclamations, destroying the barriers, then galloping off again with only his well-remembered flying cloak and tall hat visible.

At Marshall, a village about midway across the State, he found that out of seventy people in the town eighteen were seriously ill with cholera and eight had died. It was about what he had expected to find. Jacksonburg had five deaths to report as he passed through en route to Detroit on July 20th. When he arrived in the city he found that the tolling of those church bells was shattering what was left of the population's nerves and they had had to be discontinued. But the death list had not slackened. The toll for July was nearly five hundred; in August the fight against the plague began to make progress. With the coolness of September, cholera disappeared.

No one in Detroit could explain how it happened to break out there. Blame was shared equally between the rotten steerage floors of the *Henry Clay* and the crowded conditions among its troops which made practices of sanitation difficult. Where it came from originally was in doubt. There had been known cases of cholera traceable to fever-infested ships from the

Orient docking at United States ports, but the disease did not reach epidemic proportions at any of these seacoast cities.

When it was all over, the memory of that long-legged young man on a galloping horse, cigar clamped between his teeth, returned many times to Michigan people. They remembered the quick, authoritative way he set about calming village panics; how he ordered the sheriffs and the justices of the peace around in a hurry and made them like it. He reminded them of Cass, and like that great figure legends began to be told about how he had been put to work by a busy doctor at Marshall in a futile attempt to save the life of Mrs. John D. Pierce, wife of the village pastor. When the doctor realized who Mason was, he apologized. "Go on, doctor," said Mason. "I am here to learn, not to teach."

"God bless you, Governor," said the doctor. To those people he was always "Governor". They seemed never to have heard of Porter.

4

In August, just as cholera was yielding to frenzied attack, General John T. Mason unexpectedly returned to Detroit for a visit. The city was delightful in winter and the General did not appear to have anything in particular to do, so he stayed until the following February.

So far had his able son progressed in one short year of public administration of John T.'s erstwhile job that John T. himself was treated somewhat like a stranger by those who once knew him. It must have seemed more like a decade than a year to Tom Mason if he had time to reflect upon it. And the son must have seemed like a different person to the returning parent.

We have no accurate records in the Mason correspondence as to the state of their regard for one another at this period. Whatever John T.'s failings might have been in his public dealings, we know that his family always adored him. They

often quoted some offhand remark of his to point up some patrician principle. They marvelled at the sustained silence of their mother, but her contented sighs at John T.'s return were as descriptive as a poem on the subject. She had been writing him occasionally, and in her letters she was voluble. Moreover, she was capable of graphic description. She had a spiritual bond with John T. that she never shared with any of her children. Most of herself was her husband's. During his absence she was a widow.

Upon his return, Elizabeth Moir Mason doffed her widowhood and became a wife again. The house was a happy place; Emily was seventeen and beginning to attract a share of adolescent attention, and the younger girls were noisy and active. Tom Mason continued to be the head of the family, with John T. in the position of a welcome guest of his mother's. But John T. liked that.

His return might have brought to Tom Mason's mind an incident which occurred at the time of his appointment a year before. To many Detroiters it illustrated the basic differences between father and son, but highlighted their deep affection for each other. While Tom Mason was being tried by proxy at public meetings, some difficulty over shipment of John T.'s papers and effects developed which did not yield to attempts at solution by correspondence. It became necessary for John T. to come home again and locate whatever it was that Tom couldn't find, which he did without any public notice. The *Free Press*, of August 10, 1831, says that Mason might have had some help with his famous letter "To The Public" because his father was in town that day. But the letter was written before John T. arrived. He departed immediately afterward, but stayed long enough to attend his son's invitation dinner at a Detroit hotel, at which some Whig lawyers were present.

At this dinner, when toasts were proposed, one of these Whigs decided to be a bit subtle. "Gentlemen," he said, "I give you Mr. Stevens T. Mason, the *ex-Territorial* Secretary."

"No, no!" interrupted John T. He was trembling. "Give the boy a chance! Don't hang him without a hearing!"

Fifty years went by before one of the other guests at the dinner wrote his memoirs. He said that Stevens patted his father's hand reassuringly and sat there, gazing with complete amiability upon the speaker while his father gurgled with suppressed anger. The speaker did not obtain any seconds to his toast and he sat down, somewhat red of face. Young Mason had rigid control of this situation without a spoken word, while his father would have been trapped into a loud-voiced argument which was exactly what the lawyer wanted.

A year later, Stevens was still figuratively patting John T.'s hand, and held rigid control of the Territory's administration. In October he observed his twenty-first birthday, which thereupon qualified him as a voter in the far-flung frontier prairie over which he had achieved supreme influence. He cast his first ballot as a voter on October 23rd, backing the losing candidate in a three-cornered fight for the office of Delegate to Congress. While he made no attempt to campaign for his party's choice, Austin E. Wing, out of this campaign came a slogan which once more brought Stevens T. Mason to the front pages of America. The Ann Arbor *Emigrant* haughtily referred to Wing as "a protégé of the Boy Governor". And Boy Governor Mason remained as long as he held office in Michigan, in every newspaper. It made him so angry that when he discovered the editor of that newspaper on a street in Detroit, Mason attacked him with his fists and gave him quite a beating. It was this story that was widely reprinted in New York and Boston and Washington. City editors got it out of the Ann Arbor *Argus*, a rival paper whose editor chuckled at how "... the stripling, the Boy Governor if you please, was man enough to give him a sound cuffing."

In April of the following year, 1833, Detroit was so pleased at Mason's new-found manhood that its citizens elected him to the important municipal post of Alderman-at-large, representing the entire city on the governing board. He was nominated and immediately elected to the exclusive Detroit Young Men's Society. He was elected to the volunteer fire brigade, and was called out of bed to haul a little four-wheeled pumper over

Detroit's muddy streets. "Hardly a week passed," says Emily's diary, "that did not see our home extending its hospitality to notable men who had come from the east and had stopped in Detroit to make themselves known to the 'Boy Governor' as my brother was known."

Lieutenant Jefferson Davis was making a roundabout journey of the principal cities with the captive Black Hawk, who was entertained at Mason's home with his entourage. The sinister Black Hawk and his steel-muscled warrior son slept in Mason beds that night, thus making more than a parable about political bedfellows. Mason was reported as very cordial to the old Indian. Indeed, he had reason to be grateful.

CHAPTER VI

"THAT YOUNG HOTSPUR!"

I

THE YEAR WAS 1833, and the Mason star was in the ascendant. He was emerging into the national spotlight at a time when things were dull in the newspaper offices throughout the larger cities. Editors welcomed a colorful personality. Out there on the Western frontier they saw a popular youth who somehow had inspired a fanatically loyal following, locking horns with a sour old politician who knew all the answers and who was anything but popular. Later in the century, young Abe Lincoln found himself the center of national attention during his debates with Douglas, for somewhat the same reasons. The appeal of each personality was the same: an audacious young man flinging down a challenge to an established political machine.

In the cracker-barrel debates which followed each newspaper account of Mason's doings, throughout the East, he was talked of as a "coming man". His name personified Michigan. His personality was the personality of the tough young Territory. His meteoric rise to fame illustrated how rapidly Michigan was acquiring solidity and stature.

In the Baltimore papers, accounts of Mason's doings with the Whigs and his rout of old General John R. Williams, filtered into Virginia and the Mason clan was glad. In New York, the great Washington Irving made a note of the young character at Detroit, and filed it for future reference. Mason's morning mail was full of letters from strangers everywhere who wrote him gushing letters as they write today to any celebrity.

He was twenty-one. He looked it, but acted and tried to

appear older. He was somewhat like those army pilots of the recent war who went from high school to colonel's eagles before they had much fuzz to shave.

His nominal superior, Governor Porter, was always absent. Few people had ever seen him. Mason was addressed as "Governor" both publicly and socially. He sent bills to the Territorial Council and signed appointments. He reported to the various Bureaus at Washington, and kept a tight hand over county sheriffs who were too officious. He was Governor in fact, and in the hearts and minds of his thinly settled colonies of people.

Michigan Territory stretched far, far beyond the peninsula wherein the handsome youth found himself in power. Across the big lake and far to the forested west, his influence was slight. The trappers and miners out there wanted a complete separation from him. Not because of any disapproval, but they could not see how he could administer a vast wilderness which he had never seen and knew nothing about. No one knew much about those areas, except the Sioux and Blackfeet.

Mason agreed with them wholeheartedly. Acting probably on some excellent advice, he threw his support behind the election of a Territorial Delegate to Congress who would come from the Wisconsin area and would represent it exclusively. He was trying to stimulate sentiment for statehood. If he could get Michigan admitted to the Union, that would leave the Delegate undisturbed and still functioning. It would be an argument for Congressmen to mull over. They might help him.

There was great support for Mason's plan, and some opposition. The opposition came from the Whig crowd, as usual, but it was based on sound economics. As a Territory, Michigan got a \$10,000 Federal appropriation for administrative expenses each year, and nearly lived on it. As a State, she would have to raise about three times that sum from the impoverished settlers and villagers by taxation. The pioneers out there in the tamarack swamps were having a hard enough time clearing and draining their land, and fighting fever. A money levy upon

them would hardly be met with a cordial cheer, yet many settlers were loudly in favor of it.

Some time during the spring of 1833, Mason decided that the time had come to begin fighting for Michigan as a State. He knew the battle would continue for several years. The 60,000 minimum population that Congress insisted upon was almost within sight. Another year or two of migration such as he had seen in 1832, and his goal would be reached.

He was thus, in April and May, 1833, in a dual position of almost comic contrasts. One phase of his life was that of the statesman, leading his people literally out of the wilderness toward the promised land of statehood and prosperity. He was successful, famous, popular. His enemies were muttering and plotting in political exile. The other phase was that of the pink-cheeked youth whose mother, that very month, startled him by presenting him with a baby sister. In this phase he was the young fellow who worked in an office during the day and came home to study at night, and who occasionally took his sisters out to dinner at the Mansion House. He was the boy who aroused all sorts of hopes in the hearts of impressionable girls and their mothers; the frustrated, overgrown kid who, the preceding winter, had gone down to the Detroit River incognito and stayed up late sliding down the steep banks onto the ice on a child's sled.

He had more self-discipline than his father. He never mixed his twin personalities. In his office he really ran the Territory, and Governor Porter's office was like a tomb. Evenings, he took Porter's assistant downtown to Uncle Ben Woodworth's Steamboat Hotel bar, and plied him with ale and questions about the law. The assistant was a young Philadelphia lawyer named Kintsing Pritchette, whom Porter had appointed as his secretary because of personal liking for him. Pritchette was glad to become Mason's law tutor. He was, like Mason, an opportunist. He could see by now the relative importance of Porter and Mason in the Territory. Hence, he helped Mason at every opportunity and was ready with advice both legal and political.

At Uncle Ben's taproom it was the custom for each little group to select a corner, or a table, or a little space of its own. Some cliques were heavy drinkers. Some were noisy. Others preferred to drink even deeper of the atmosphere of the famous pioneer inn overlooking the wide river.

Mason was one of the latter. So were a few others like himself, such as Colonel John Norvell, George Palmer, Major Isaac S. Rowland and Pritchette. This quintet became an established barroom club. It met every night. It was actually a law school. Pritchette was coaching Major Rowland and young George Palmer as well as Mason for the bar examination to be held that autumn. Each of the three had personal reasons for his choice of this form of legal study instead of the more formal reading of law in some attorney's office.

Norvell was the postmaster of Detroit, newly appointed to replace the venerable Whig, James Abbott, who had held the post for twenty years. Never previously acquainted in the city, he was thrown by politics into the company of the most prominent Democrat in the community, who was Mason. He was a big, handsome, virile man in his middle thirties, who was married to a girl said by Emily to be "the prettiest woman who ever set foot in Michigan Territory". The Norvells visited at the Mason home, and vice versa, constantly. The friendship between the young postmaster and the even younger Secretary and Acting Governor was a lasting one.

Georgie Palmer was the son of the distinguished old Detroit clan, the Thomas Palmers. He preferred to study law with Pritchette mostly because his family had a low opinion of his abilities, and he was trying to show them that he could accomplish something on his own. Ike Rowland, a man of self-made success, was a Michigan-born pioneer whose chief interest in life was the regiment of Michigan Volunteers, in which he was a battalion commander. He was only a year or so older than Mason, a superb physical specimen, and had led an adventurous life which made him seem like a storybook hero to fifteen-year-old Kate Mason.

The Boy Governor's barroom law school didn't hold forth

as regularly as it should have. He was interrupted periodically. The baby born to wrinkled Elizabeth Moir Mason on April 5, 1833, was stillborn and he had to arrange a small funeral. In May, funds arrived unexpectedly from John T., paying semester's tuition for Emily and the next youngest sister, Kate, at Miss Emma Willard's Select School for Young Ladies at Troy, New York. At that period it was the most fashionable finishing school in America. The girls were thrilled. Mason arranged a trip which took him with them to Philadelphia, Washington and New York before reaching the school.

He must have received a very cordial welcome in Washington. His notes say nothing about a White House visit, but old Andy must have known he was in the city. After making the rounds of all the offices, he continued to Troy and returned to Detroit about midsummer.

Cholera was the biggest fear in his mind. For some strange reason, the dread disease by-passed Detroit in the summer of 1833, but struck at Louisville, Kentucky, Cincinnati, Ohio, and other points along the Ohio River. A big circus and a theatrical troupe, booked for that area, were marooned in Detroit. The summer was a happy one, broken by a flurry of excitement in June when a fugitive slave arrived in town via the "underground" with an irate owner two jumps behind. The owner was trying to head him off before he reached safety in Canada. The slave was a good public speaker. He aroused all the negroes in Detroit, who rushed to his defense. In the ensuing melee the sheriff was badly wounded and a miniature riot shattered the summer peace. This did not touch Mason's Territorial administration but it provided the subject of some interesting letters which he wrote to his sisters at Troy.

"He was handsome," sighed Emily, to her diary. People wondered why Mason didn't marry, or at least select some girl and give her an opportunity to preen herself with the dream that some day she might become the new State's first lady. They couldn't understand why he frittered away the long moonlight nights in Uncle Ben's barroom. The papers thought he was a heavy drinker. Emily herself, not knowing what was

transpiring at the barroom, complained that Mason was a "social votary . . . given to conviviality."

At twenty-one he was still a bit under six feet, but had filled out very satisfactorily. His dark-brown hair, almost black, worn somewhat full as was the fashion, waved from front to back. He had the clean, regular features of a romantic actor, that impression being heightened by a pair of black, neatly arched eyebrows that looked almost too perfect. His nose was straight, his strong chin cleft with a dimple, and his blue eyes were framed in thick dark lashes almost like a girl's. Careful training had forced him to carry his lithe body stiffly erect, head held high. That classic posture seemed even more statuesque when viewed in the decorative clothing of the period: black broadcloth tail coat, high silk hat, valanced cloak, stiff shirt front and black satin neckstock. He was a figure to set many a girl's pulse pounding, and young swains' tongues to sarcasm. He knew it, and often purposely appeared with his wavy hair in great disarray and wrinkles in his satin vest. He thought that the men who came to see him would resent it if he were too well-groomed. There are sketches of him which show his hair pulled forward in awkward blobs around his ears. Others show it plastered flat on his high forehead as if he purposely were trying to look older and partially bald. His official State portrait depicts him thus.

These tricks succeeded merely in making him look drunk, but he evidently preferred that to looking too handsome. Emily shared the prevailing opinion in Detroit about his nocturnal habits. People who saw him almost daily marvelled that after a night of debauchery at Uncle Ben's barroom he could appear pink-cheeked and amiable the next morning. Ike Rowland and Norvell kept the secret whenever they came to the Mason home, which was frequently. During the girls' absence, Rowland had forgotten all about Kate. But she had not forgotten him. Letters from the girls at Troy poured in, many of them addressed to the Major. Rowland wrote that she ought to become a writer. Years later, she did. She signed her books "Kate

Mason Rowland", just as she knew, at the age of fifteen, that she would.

"Tom," wrote Emily, "had scant time and less inclination for affairs of the heart, though so handsome, so gay and so amiable as to be much in demand and admired by the ladies." Emily didn't mention the state of his bank roll, or the fact that Mason couldn't afford to buy a girl a ring or anything else that cost an important sum. He himself was probably painfully aware of this condition. It may have been a big factor in his determination to side-step what Emily called "affairs of the heart".

One way to make enough money to support the family and still have a wife, he felt, would be to engineer the formation of the State government as soon as possible. If he could get himself elected to the Governorship and collect a handsome salary each quarter, many of his most pressing troubles would be over. The people were ready for it. The time was now. Washington was receptive.

2

The more young Mason meditated on the task of building a State government, the more the idea fascinated him. It was an unparalleled opportunity for a young man. He would be the progenitor, the father of everything in the State, the namesake of all the new accomplishments. His name would live. He sat back in his big office chair and dreamed of what he would do with *his* State, and *his* people.

His mind began framing the preamble to the Constitution. He wondered about a State seal. What great scholar would furnish an impressive Latin motto? Who would select the State flower, the State animal, the State nickname? *He* would.

Daydreaming was a harmless pastime. Making these dreams come true would take work. Mason was prepared to work for the realization of his goal, but first he had to plan carefully the sequence of moves that would culminate in success. "First things first" became his motto. He knew he could meet the

Congressional minimums as to population and plan of operation. The next question was that of the boundaries of his new State. There he ran headlong against one of the sorest political disputes of the nineteenth century. Specifically, the southern border of Michigan Territory, where it adjoined Ohio, had been the subject of political and private friction ever since Cass warned him about it in 1830.

During the winter of 1833-34 he stayed much at home, making up his mind how to attack this problem. He began to see it as the climax of the whole battle. If he could win the border dispute, he could win admittance for Michigan as a State. Success in this controversy meant success in everything. Conversely, if he failed there, he would lose all hope of getting Michigan admitted during any period in which he would hold office.

He could not concentrate his whole attention upon it during the winter. He was admitted to the Michigan bar on December 11, 1833, along with Georgie Palmer and Major Ike Rowland, which called for a whopper of a celebration in Uncle Ben's taproom and called down the Whig newspapers upon his head in consequence. The year 1834 began with a fresh series of family disasters which upset his schedule entirely for weeks at a time.

While the two eldest girls were at school in Troy, Mason's mother had been plunged into inconsolable grief by the death of "Sunshine Sister Mary", aged five, the youngest. She, according to many contemporary accounts, was a chubby, lively little thing who bore the name of Elizabeth Mason's first child, who had died in Kentucky at the age of twelve. The saddened mother never completely recovered from this tragedy, the nature of which is a complete mystery. The family name for her, "Sunshine," is graphically descriptive of the sweet little girl she must have been. Mason, of course, cancelled all social appointments and went into mourning.

During the same winter the invalid daughter, Theodosia, aged eleven, died mysteriously, too, on January 7, 1834. The secret of her affliction went to the grave with her. It left the

brave Elizabeth Mason staring almost incredulously at the great gold-hinged family Bible, which showed the pitifully brief annals of the thirteen children she had borne in twenty-two years. In midwinter, 1833-34, four were alive: Stevens T., Emily, Kate and Laura.

John T. was in Cincinnati en route southwest from Washington. He wrote her to come and spend a few quiet weeks with him. Sister Laura, aged twelve, became a pupil in Father Kundig's new convent school outside Detroit. Mason was alone in the house. The family was reunited in March, when the two older sisters returned from Troy in Mason's two-horse sleigh after a three-week battle with blizzards. Elizabeth tried to show a little cheerfulness, but failed. She was very weak.

Mason had a long and serious talk with Emily, who straightway took over the household. She became his official hostess, and a sort of secretary as well. Her diary at this period is full of notes on the visitors who came, what they ate, what they said. She reports that her mother was fighting against the temptation to give up and become a bedridden invalid. Elizabeth forced her to get up and go through the motions of welcoming guests, but all of them could see the strain it caused.

In the spring, Mason was able to turn his attention once more to the business of the Territory. Governor Porter, who is a dimly seen background figure during this period, had his brief moment in the spotlight very early in the year. He returned from Pennsylvania in midwinter to collect a large sum in back salary, and to discharge the only real official function he could not delegate to Mason. This was the annual message to the Council. In January, 1834, Porter produced a document which sounds to us of this generation quite New Deal-ish. He was interested in the first attempts to combine little local railroads into statewide trunk lines throughout the East. He thought that, because of the cost, it was a task beyond the resources of private companies and ought to be undertaken by the people.

In his message he went over the old familiar praises of the Michigan topography, with its transverse rivers seemingly

made for commerce and transport. He brought up an impressive array of arguments about how the railroad, as a public project, would stimulate the sale of public lands, develop new cities, provide employment, and create traffic for itself.

Mason listened to this message, and was stirred. He was convinced. Coupled with his task of creating a new State, now came the equally difficult task of creating a great railroad system, out of nothing. He did not know the elemental facts about railroads, or about any engineering problem. He did not have John T.'s economic training. But he had an intuition, and impulsively he backed it.

Porter's message went a great deal further than mere railroads, demanding money for improvements in rivers and harbors, for canals, and for all sorts of projects with fat Federal payrolls. Mason recognized these demands for the treasury-tapping political pap they were. But the railroad idea took possession of him from that moment. He began to dream again, conjuring up a vision of what Michigan would look like fifty years hence, with railroads winding between busy new cities, serving a happy and prosperous populace. Dreams always produce visions like that.

Somebody should have warned him. The vision was economically sound, and the railroad had to come some day. Mason thought he could do anything. He had the imagination to see what had to be done, and the ability to get it done. But he lacked the experience to protect himself from the political wolves who were to attack him incessantly before that railroad ever crossed Michigan. That railroad, which he helped so much to create, eventually killed him. If he had not attempted to finance it, he might have lived to be ninety, like Emily.

Suddenly, Governor Porter died. Mason heard about it on July 6, 1834, almost at the moment his death occurred. Porter was supervising construction on his new house, below the city on his new park-line farm. He had contracted a strange illness while across the lake in Wisconsin, on a treaty dicker with the

Winnebago Indians sometime during March. He did not seem to be ill when he returned, but abruptly he was dead.

Mason quickly arranged the necessary formalities and the notices of official mourning. He was Governor now, in sole command. At the news of Porter's death, Mason went up several notches in prestige. People looked to him to bring their demand for State government into reality, and to do something about the appalling condition of the roads throughout the Territory. The logical climax of that quest, of course, was the railroad.

The Council worked with him smoothly and swiftly. Charters were granted to two new railroad companies which were to build sections of the state-wide system. Engineers were employed on contract to drive a survey for the trunk line across the peninsula from Detroit to St. Joseph.

There was not a foot of railroad track, nor any rail vehicle in operation, in the whole peninsula. Some companies had been chartered previously, but political squabbles of various sorts kept them from completing their work. One company was grading its right-of-way between Adrian and Port Lawrence (Toledo), but had not finished. Public interest naturally centered on the "big line", the cross-country road that was to connect Detroit with Chicago via St. Joseph.

There were two possible routes. The old road known as the "Chicago turnpike" swung straight southwest from Detroit and angled through the Irish Hills to Coldwater. Thence it was more or less guesswork and gamble with the swamps for many miles, until it gave up altogether in the sand dunes at the lower end of Lake Michigan. A detour had been constructed which went through northern Indiana, and eventually provided a wagon trail all the way to Chicago. It was the shorter of the two routes, but because a goodly share of it lay in Indiana, and more practically because it avoided all the new towns, it was not considered as a public project by the citizens of Michigan.

The route selected was the old Indian trail between St.

Joseph and Detroit, packed hard by the moccasined feet of Indians for a hundred and fifty years as they made their frequent pilgrimages to Malden, Ontario, to receive presents from the British. Alongside it and sometimes over it, Governor Cass had hewed out a lane which he called the "Territorial Road". On this road were rapidly expanding settlements every few miles. Some of them in 1834 were good-sized towns: Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, Dexter, Chelsea, Jackson, Marshall, Battle Creek, Bronson (Kalamazoo) and St. Joseph; it carried the vast bulk of Michigan's commerce.

The engineers' survey ended the line at St. Joseph and recommended a fleet of steamboats for the short voyage to Chicago. Technical skill of the time was baffled by those sand dunes, which wandered like enormous whales over some hundreds of square miles, never still. Since the road could not go through them, the steamboat was a satisfactory answer. The project aroused enthusiasm because this entire route lay in Michigan.

The condition of this road in 1834 was almost indescribable. In good weather a traveller could find traces of wagon tracks. In foul weather he could not locate any part of a road. Volunteer parties of settlers built bridges over the worst rivers, but freshets washed them out. The miles of swamps were snake-infested and disease-ridden. Mud was a constant curse. In 1834 some people pushing westward from Detroit in a wagon got as far as Dexter. Then:

"There is an extensive marsh on the road near Grass Lake in Jackson County. It gave us much trouble. We had not made more than half the distance across it when we were brought up standing, or rather sticking, in the mud. Thinking to lighten our load we all got off and waded through, happily escaping the venomous fangs of the snakes with which the swamp is thickly infested." Four yokes of oxen could not budge the wagon, and the occupants were getting hungry. "Totally unconscious of how far we were from a human habitation, we waited. Eight o'clock in the evening found our teams mud-bound, and ourselves perched on high ground bedrabbled with

the soil of Michigan." In the morning, seven ox teams hauled the wagon free.

A stage line operating over the road in 1834 promised to make the distance from Detroit to St. Joseph in five days, "in fine weather". In rotten weather, the drivers just gave up wherever they were, and waited. The road from Ypsilanti to Ann Arbor was "whitened by the ribs of rotted wagons and broken wheels" abandoned everywhere. The Detroit *Advertiser*, horrified by this vista, said that the wreckage of smashed vehicles made the road look like "the route of a retreating army". The road was so bad between Jackson and Marshall that "inns thrived at two-mile intervals".

The railroad had to come, and soon. Dr. Fuller's thesis on the subject says that as soon as Stephenson's *Rocket* had made the first practical rail journey in England, agitation for railroads broke out in Michigan. In 1834 only a few miles of experimental railroads had been built in the East, but the craze for them hit Michigan suddenly, keynoted by Governor Porter's message, and followed through with frenzy by Michigan promoters. The Detroit *Courier* advised Eastern capitalists who had missed the train in the East when railroads were being organized there "to bring their funds hither and forthwith take preliminary steps to invest the same in the railroad between Detroit and Chicago".

Chicago became a magic word in America with the demonstration that railroads were practical. Lake Erie steamboats and Detroit's outfitting facilities had channeled the bulk of Western emigration through the city, but the condition of the road was discouraging the flow. More and more emigrants were landing at Port Lawrence and taking the military turnpike to Chicago. Detroit promoters demanded that something be done at once.

Mason was freed by Porter's death from the restrictions placed upon a "Secretary and Acting Governor". He had been in power most of the time for the past three years. His achievements and personal popularity had, by that time, taken most of the bitterness out of the fact of his position on the part of

suspicious old Whig officeholders in the townships. He was approaching his twenty-third birthday. He had the scene set and the props in place for his greatest performance. The cast was ready. Everything seemed in place.

Before he could raise the curtain, he was plunged into a new disaster. During the first week of August, 1834, Asiatic cholera hit Detroit the worst blow in her entire history. It scourged the city and the Territory for five weeks. Detroit lost an officially tabulated seven percent of its population during August, and the Historical Commission records claim as high as ten percent. Everyone who could pack a few belongings fled the accursed city. Epidemics broke out simultaneously at Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Pontiac.

Mason's father had remained at Cincinnati, just resting, all spring. He now appeared in Detroit and whisked away the invalid mother and the three girls. Hospitals were set up in the churches. The top floor of Mason's capitol building was pressed into service again. Nowhere were there medicines enough or doctors enough. The awful suddenness of the plague seemed like a special curse to the frightened citizens. There would be suddenly a feeling of dizziness, a fainting attack, horrible abdominal gripes, nausea, diarrhoea, then coma and the stiff relief of death.

Streets deserted, stores closed, boats warned away from the docks, Detroit staggered along as if she were herself a victim of the dread plague. On August 16th, exhausted Dr. Rice stumbled into his office in a building on the present site of the First National Bank. Thirty-seven victims had died that day, and the doctor was at his wit's end.

"Everybody's dying," he sighed. "Every one of us will die. Two years ago I bled all my patients and most of them recovered. This year, every one I have bled has died just the same."

A youth named Robert Turner was scurrying about, making some notes for a newspaper article he hoped to sell. He thought he would die, too. He described the insidious way the plague

seemed to creep up and down the river, touching the docks, warehouses and even the ships lying at anchor.

"Men fell as if struck by lightning," he wrote. "When at early dawn the old French carts could be seen in line, like the commissariat of the Grand Army of Napoleon, stretching away to the old cemetery, a fearful line of festering corpses; when all men, no matter how brave, seemed appalled, when we had no hospitals, no asylums, no place of refuge for the sick and the dying, Father Kundig, God bless him, improvised a hospital on North Grand Avenue. He summoned to his aid the fair daughters, sweet young girls, of the Desnoyers, the De Quindres, the Campeaus, and organized them into a splendid corps of Sisters of Mercy. There, day and night, amid filth and misery, faced with death in its most frightful form, they fought. When death came, they gave to the poor, the hungry and the lost, the last beautiful rites of their Church."

Judge Witherell's wife died. General Larned, the old pioneer, died. Hundreds of lesser-known people died. But Robert Turner lived to be eighty. He remembered a man and wife during the epidemic of 1834 who had newly arrived in Detroit. The man left his wife for three days, to look for a place in the country. When he came back, his wife had died and had been buried and he could not locate the grave. Another man sent all his family to a place of safety outside of town. He remained to help the emergency workers, believing that he would be stricken any time. All of his family were killed by the plague, but he survived. Even the doctor who treated him died.

Throughout the epidemic of 1834, the crooked open sewer which modern doctors blame for the epidemic crawled and wriggled its way across town, ignored. It was not Mason, but a Dr. Whiting who called his contemporaries' attention to it in the belief that in some way, not then known, it was the source of these recurrent epidemics. Dr. Whiting practiced medicine for fifteen years in Detroit, including the two epidemics in 1832 and 1834. When he started in earnest to fight for a water supply, and piped sewers, and a cover over the

polluted creek, cholera disappeared. Cases of it have been known since, but never again did it reach the deadly menace that it became in August, 1834.

Mason did not know why he lived through that month. In September the falling temperature had a magic effect upon the disease, and by October it had vanished. Nobody knew where it came from, or how to fight it. Mason did not profess to know. He had been exposed to it every day since the epidemic broke out, but in some manner had never contracted it. He did what little a layman could do, by straightening out arguments between rival volunteer organizations with divergent ideas, and by organizing supplies of clean linen and medicines from outlying towns. In October, 1834, he sat at his desk in his little Jefferson Avenue home. It was over. He was still alive. The rest of the family was in New York, whither they had gone with John T. to help him spend some of the money he was making from his Southern ventures. He tried to tell them about the epidemic, but found himself joking about it.

"The longer I live," he wrote, "the more I hate 'good society' as it is now rated. Had I an empire of my own, I would as strictly quarantine the approach of fashion as I would that of a contagious fever. Both are equally dangerous. One case of either thrown into a community will soon spread over it, unless in the former instance the constitutions of the citizens are sufficiently strong to withstand disease, and in the latter, their heads are sufficiently strong to resist the contagion of fashion. So recollect, you and Emily are to bring none of the *exquisites* of fashion concealed in your *frock sleeves*, or I shall follow the recent example of Governor Hayne of South Carolina and consider it my duty to issue a proclamation against your landing in the Territory."

He had been advised by some impatient soul in New York, probably Washington Irving, that the English author, Harriet Martineau, was coming, and was planning on staying at the Mason home while in Detroit. The correspondent wanted to know what Mason was going to do to entertain the great and awe-inspiring lady, who was irritable, haughty, and deaf.

She went about poking at people with her stout cane and jabbing an ear trumpet at them, screeching: "Hey? Hey?" Mason was apprehensive. The distinguished lady was then in New York and the family had met her. Emily wrote that she was a pretty difficult social problem to tackle. Mason replied:

"I have been daily standing in dread of the arrival of Miss Martineau, who I am informed has been invited to take up her quarters with us during her visit. I wish her no harm, but pray Heaven she may never arrive. Imagine to yourself, Miss Martineau among us with our present household; Jemmy the *dining-room servant*, and Ann, her *waiting-maid*. An earthquake would not produce more terror amongst us than her presence. Everybody about the house trembles at the noise of a steamboat. Even the old gobbler in the yard seems frightened, for the knock of Miss Martineau at the door of our *mansion* is the knell of his departure 'to the place from which turkeys never return'. If a master's hopes, his servants prayers and a gobbler's petitions will avail anything, Heaven will send adverse winds to the vessel that bears Miss Martineau to our port."

Heaven duly sent the adverse winds, or in some manner scrambled up the Martineau travel schedule, because she did not arrive until June, 1835. The awesome Harriet wrote a five-volume report called *Society in America*, and *Retrospect of Western Travel*, in which she said that Detroit "overwhelmed" her. She had the same effect on the Masons.

Before her arrival, while the family was still in New York, Mason began his long-delayed campaign to settle the border dispute with Ohio. He sent a series of letters to governors of other States trying to drum up some moral support nationally, which he believed would have an effect politically upon members of Congress. He was starting a pressure drive on Congress to counterbalance the weight of Ohio's senators and representatives, who were determined to keep Michigan Territory out of the area under dispute. For example, he wrote to the Governor of Virginia:

"Michigan feels justified in making an appeal to Virginia in

the fact that she is, in effect, her offspring"—since a century before Virginia had claimed all the territory around the Lakes, then, in 1789, had relinquished it.

"We spring from a noble and disinterested generosity on the part of Virginia. . . . Michigan looks to her as a parent, and feels a strong degree of confidence in the belief that her rights will be respected. It is with pleasure, Sir, that I address you on this subject, from whom candor, impartiality and justice can confidently be expected, and if permitted to allude to my own feelings, as a native of Virginia, in justification of the zeal with which I urge a full examination of the subject by your Excellency, under a conviction that you will recommend to the legislature of your State the adoption of such measures as will be consistent with the rights of those interested."

His Excellency was appalled, no doubt, by that sentence. He went back over it and eventually deciphered it as an appeal for support over the border claim. He cautiously replied:

"I could say nothing more and nothing half so well. Masons should never forget Virginia, and Virginia will never forget the Masons."

He promised to look into the matter. Nothing happened, except that his legislature passed some "stilted compliments" and dropped the topic.

The Boy Governor was trying to bludgeon Congress into validating Michigan's claim for a strip of land between Michigan and Ohio containing the present city of Toledo. The question had to be settled for all time before the more important problem of statehood could be tackled. The slice of land under dispute contained all of present Lucas County and Maumee Bay, which was, in 1835, the best harbor on western Lake Erie. Mason insisted with every resource at his command that the area was his.

Governor Lucas, of Ohio, was equally stubborn about hanging on for all he was worth. He had merely moved in and settled the area, knowing that it was legally Michigan's. But then, as now, possession was nine points of the law. Furthermore, Ohio as a State had a good-sized political influence in

Congress whereas Michigan as a Territory had none. The inevitable clash between the aged and stubborn Lucas and the young and irrepressible Mason began in the form of raucous offstage noises and mutual sarcasm. It progressed to pressure blocs, political horse-trades and attempts by both sides to out-wit each other. It gathered momentum as the firmness of each leader became evident. In the spring of 1835 it had arrived at the now-familiar point where neither side could concede anything without losing face. It was war.

3

The "Toledo War" is an episode in United States history which has puzzled researchers for upwards of a hundred years. There is no satisfactory explanation for what happened, or why the affair didn't turn into a bloody interstate conflict. The records say it was a war. The eyewitnesses remember it as a frolic, wherein everybody had a high old time and no one, outside of a sheriff or two, got hurt.

The participants' accounts read like a scenario of an old-time Keystone comedy. It had the whole Keystone cast: the whiskered cops falling out of windows, the stalwart young hero (Mason), the villain (Lucas) and his angry cohorts, and even the traditional "wow finish", complete with hectic chases over hill and dale. It was slapstick in that nobody was hurt and the props were mostly fakes. Conversely, it was grimly realistic in that it caused a terrible commotion in Congress, cost the Boy Governor his job, alarmed the nation with the spectre of bloody civil war, and as a penalty for starting it, cost Michigan the city of Toledo.

Toledo in 1835 was a collection of marshes, warehouses and docks known as Port Lawrence. The name Toledo had just been coined by the merchants of Ohio, and the new city was starting to be built by the lake. Ohio enterprise had built it, and built the roads that led to it from many an inland village and pioneer settlement. While legally a part of Michigan Territory, Michigan had never colonized the area and was not well

represented there. Ohio was trying to legalize the acquisition of the Maumee Bay area by a bill in Congress.

Mason had been trying to block a vote on this bill for some time. He had the law on his side. Originally, the creation of the Northwest Territory in 1787 had fixed the boundary between Michigan Territory and Ohio at "... a line drawn due east from the southern tip or extremity of Lake Michigan." This line intersected Lake Erie below Maumee Bay, thus placing Perrysburg, Port Lawrence and the projected city of Toledo in Michigan Territory. It also included a slice of the present State of Indiana, with cities like South Bend, Elkhart, Angola and many smaller villages.

At the time Ohio and Indiana were admitted to the Union they defined their borders as lines which ran well north of the official border. They were able to do it because they had populated this area and Michigan had not; because they had influence at Washington and Michigan had none. They were admitted with the borders they claimed in their applications. Now, in 1835, twenty years later, Michigan was attempting statehood and this border question exploded with a bang.

Mason ordered a new survey run along the line laid down in the Ordinance of 1787. The engineer who surveyed it, John A. Fulton, made a very detailed study of the terrain, and the line came to be known as the "Fulton Line". This was to be Mason's southern border, he proclaimed.

Indiana stiffly reminded Michigan that when she was admitted, in December, 1816, she had been granted a border that ran ten miles north of this line and nobody had complained, hence there could be no yelp about it now. Indiana's admission had occurred at a time when old Governor Cass was out on one of his Indian forays, and no one had taken the trouble to challenge the claim. Therefore, that strip of land was lost to the new State of Michigan. Mason did not attempt to make an issue of it.

But Maumee Bay, and the projected port area of Toledo, was something else. Ohio had likewise claimed a generous



The surveyors' sketch accompanying the Harris Line survey of the Michigan-Ohio border controversy of 1835. The sketch was the one submitted to Congress explaining the territory in dispute.

slice of Michigan Territory upon gaining admittance, and Michigan was now challenging the grab.

In 1816, while the northern border of Indiana was being surveyed, Ohio had ordered a new survey run simultaneously. The Surveyor-General's office at Washington had sent out William A. Harris, with instructions to run the line as set forth in the Ordinance of 1787; that is, due east from the southern tip of Lake Michigan. Harris, however, for reasons which have since been in dispute, ran his line so that it angled just a little northward from its starting point, just enough so that it came out on the northern tip of Maumee Bay, placing the whole port area in Ohio. Governor Lucas was standing

pat on the "Harris Line", which was Ohio's northern border when she was admitted as a State.

Mason's opening gun in the "Toledo War" was his signature on a bill passed by the Territorial Council on January 26, 1835, authorizing the people of Michigan to hold a constitutional convention and form a State government. There was no Congressional authorization for such a move. In fact, Mason had twice been warned not to try to "burglarize" Michigan into the Union with any such pressure tactics. But this time he went ahead anyhow. The convention, held at Ann Arbor, promptly applied for admission as a State with a southern border fixed on the old "Fulton Line".

Governor Lucas countered this move with the appointment of a commission to put up prominent markers all along the "Harris Line". Mason replied with a bill in the Council making it unlawful for any person, "not a citizen of Michigan Territory," to exercise official functions anywhere within its borders, on pain of a \$1,000 fine and five years' imprisonment. This bill, signed on February 12, 1835, aroused great indignation in Washington, where it was viewed as a highhanded attempt on Mason's part to prevent a peaceful solution of the problem. It gave him the power of arrest and a whacking penalty, which Congress knew he was planning to use against the engineers then at Toledo finishing the locks of the new Maumee Canal. This canal was an Ohio project and a source of pride to the whole State.

In order to protect the precious canal, Governor Lucas grew equally highhanded. He straightway organized the disputed terrain into a new Ohio county, which he called Lucas, containing two townships, Sylvania and Port Lawrence. He sent a set of county officers, including a sheriff and a judge, with orders to hold court there and thus defy Mason's attempt to administer it. On February 23rd, the county began to function.

The first round went to Governor Lucas on points. He had his boundary marked and his civil officers in possession. Mason, spurred to action, took the field as a sort of generalissimo,

mobilizing the militia, calling for volunteers, chartering lake transports. He dispatched his friend Colonel Norvell post-haste to Washington, to howl for "protection".

Mason's strategy was to raise as much fuss as possible, hoping to spar for time until Michigan could be admitted as a State under her new constitution, whereupon he could appeal to the Supreme Court. There he knew he would win a clean decision. The Ohio authorities knew it, too. They saw they must block that move at all costs. They sharply reminded the politicians in Congress that Indiana stood solidly beside Ohio on the question; that Ohio had twenty-one electoral votes, Indiana had fourteen more, and Michigan had none.

In the great game of politics, Michigan had no chips. Andrew Jackson was Mason's friend, but he was also a politician. He could not stomach the thought of a noisy bloc of dissenters in Congress thwarting him on every proposal, and fighting him and the Party in every election. He had to purchase peace with this bloc of votes. It was imperative.

The national press was having a field day over the issue, strongly influenced in Mason's favor. Behind the scenes the Ohio politicians were lining up a regular blockade in Congress, determined to steam-roller their demands through no matter how much popular support Mason had. In desperation, the President assigned Attorney General Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts to investigate and recommend a solution.

Butler investigated. His report blew the lid off the case, and destroyed whatever chance there might have been of securing an agreement by peaceful negotiation. He said Michigan's title to the strip was unquestionably genuine. There was nothing the President could do in the courts, and if the Federal government started to intervene forcibly, its officers would probably be shot by partisans of both sides. However, Butler continued, "some contingency might arise" which would justify the President in removing Mason from office. That was Butler's solution. He thought Mason "too zealous in enforcing what he believes to be the rights of Michigan". Fire Mason, he said, and get a yes man in his place.

When he heard of this brilliant bit of political opportunism, Mason was infuriated. From Washington came a succession of letters. His friends at the capital were frightened. Colonel Norvell wrote: "You must abandon the project in all haste. The President will not hesitate to demand your removal."

Old General Cass, who had seen this problem coming to a boil for two decades, wrote philosophically: "This is the most dastardly piece of political manipulation I have ever seen. Ohio has not a leg to stand on before the courts. Yet you are about to be sacrificed to political pressure." He reminded Mason about all the votes in Congress against him, and advised the young executive to approach the problem with the "utmost caution".

Mason saw himself being made the goat in a political frame-up. He took counsel. He was going to be fired; he realized that. But as he pondered the situation he tried to see wherein he could make capital out of it; how to salvage enough to go on to fresh triumphs, greater heights. This was not going to be the end of him.

He could not surrender. His pledge to the people prevented that, and he was not the kind of man who could give in to anything under pressure, or threats. He had to go on. What would happen?

The Territory was well past the 60,000 minimum population demanded by Congress as a condition of statehood. The new constitution was neatly inscribed on parchment, and the first party conventions were to be held that summer under its provisions. Sentiment throughout the counties was running wild in all sorts of village demonstrations for immediate statehood. The Democratic convention would offer him the Governorship, and elections would be held in the fall.

If he could maintain his popularity at almost fever pitch throughout the summer, he would be unbeatable. He would delay; he would keep the agitation going, and he would not concede an inch. He would rally the whole Territory behind him, or as much of it as he could mobilize. And he would make a noise like a big army on the march, to keep a desire for open

hostilities in the hearts of Ohio people sublimated as much as possible.

He said nothing to anyone about his plans. Immediately after the receipt of these warnings from Washington, events in Michigan moved rapidly toward a military outbreak. Troops drilled; supplies were procured. General Joe Brown galloped to remote farms and settlements, waving a manifesto from Mason calling up troops for a war with Ohio. With yells and virile roars, the men responded.

Out from Washington came two worried mediators, Richard Rush of Philadelphia and Benjamin C. Howard of Baltimore. They interviewed Mason at Detroit. He told them he would hold operations in abeyance until they could call a meeting with Governor Lucas, at which the problem might be settled across the table. In the meantime, however, he insisted that Ohio remove its civil officers and others claiming jurisdiction from the disputed territory.

Governor Lucas told the mediators bluntly that he was conceding nothing and would not even discuss arbitration. He had plenty of political influence, and was at the moment reading pledges of support from more Congressmen at Washington. He said he would do all right unless the Federal government intervened, which he feared would provoke warfare.

Since arbitration had failed, the mediators returned to Detroit and told Mason the sad story which was the real reason for their visit. They had a personal message from the President. In it, Jackson renewed his personal affection for Mason but warned him that he would have to surrender to Ohio unconditionally. The method the mediators recommended was simple. Michigan was not to attempt to enforce the Act of February 12th, the one containing the heavy penalty for the attempted exercise of official functions by non-citizens of Michigan Territory. Just forget that, they told Mason. Don't enforce it; allow Ohio to finish its canal and build up the area, and Jackson would reward him later with a generous land settlement for his new State in place of the Toledo area.

Mason was sorry, but he would not wink at non-enforcement

of laws because somebody told him to. Not even the President had the right to require that of him. "I owe Jackson everything," he said, "but even the President must execute the duly voted laws of the nation." Furthermore, if Jackson thought he was just a political puppet who could be manipulated that way, then the President ought to remove him and appoint someone else. He finished with this sentence: "I will submit to my fate without a murmur, and even be satisfied with the result."

Messrs. Rush and Howard returned to Washington in awe of him, convinced that Stevens Thomson Mason was the most conscientious man ever to hold public office. They reported to Jackson that he had, in effect, told them to go jump in the lake. Jackson had no alternative but to act.

He knew Mason was right, and that Michigan's case was legally bombproof. But he would have to go. Jackson, with Mason's scalp figuratively at his belt, went forth to purchase political peace with those thirty-five electoral votes.

Mason knew that formal notification of his dismissal was only a matter of time. He was given a tremendous ovation at the Democratic State convention at Ann Arbor, and nominated by whooping acclamation to be the first Governor of the State. Quietly he strengthened the sheriff's posse in Lenawee County, Michigan, near Toledo, to the size of a company of infantry. This posse caught some of Lucas's surveyors running their marker posts well within the Territory, and took them captive to the town courthouse at Tecumseh, where they were tried under the new law.

The surveyor himself and three rodmen managed to escape, and ran terrorized through the underbrush to distant Perrysburg, Ohio, yelling that they had been kidnapped and held for ransom by a party of armed thugs who wore uniforms and looked like an army.

Excitement ran high throughout Ohio. Mobs gathered. In Washington, as fast as the news could get there, the Ohio delegation screamed civil war. This was the pretext Jackson needed to remove Mason. He demanded an explanation via military courier. Mason sent him the sheriff's report, which

denied that the expedition was military in character. The report described how the Ohio escapers ripped their clothes trying to get through the bushes, lost hats and even shoes in their haste, and stated that:

"... the surveyors' fugitives made good time through the swamp and arrived in Perrysburg the following morning with nothing more serious than the loss of clothing, including a pair of Major Stinckney's breeches—a pair without a patch."

Major Stinckney, an officer in the Ohio militia, had a farm near Perrysburg. His strapping six-foot son, Two Stinckney, was a bully. His father, being a military man, called off his sons by the numbers, and this happened to be the second. Two Stinckney had been in the party with his father, protecting the surveyors, when the posse came along. He was ridden on a rail back to Ohio, and there unceremoniously dumped off. The people of Ohio took it as a personal insult.

A couple of days later, the Major himself was nabbed while riding a horse on reconnaissance some miles inside Michigan's area. The posse trussed him up with ropes like a big-game specimen, and carried him fourteen miles to the courthouse at Monroe. In this fracas, Two Stinckney stabbed a deputy, who was the only casualty in the war.

However, on July 18th, a Michigan posse of more than two hundred and fifty well-armed men swaggered into Toledo and arrested all the Ohio officers visible. Several, in fact a good many, escaped to Perrysburg. Some of them got there only two jumps ahead of this commando raid, and magnified the tale to sound as if the whole population of Michigan was on the march.

About August 15, 1835, Mason heard in Detroit that the Ohio militia had been called out and was marching to Toledo. The report was untrue, but he had no way of checking it. He sent word to his own commander, General Brown, to move forthwith to Toledo and hold it until further orders. With the order he instructed Major Rowland to place into operation the staff plan for such a contingency which the militia had evolved many months previously. Troops converged on Toledo

simultaneously from three directions. Loaded steam transports appeared offshore. Ohio's spies galloped furiously back to Governor Lucas with this information. Straightway, as Mason had foreseen, the enthusiasm for battle on the part of the Ohio boys cooled noticeably.

Governor Lucas's plan called for the arrival of his troops at Perrysburg on September 5th. On the morning of September 2nd, Michigan troops were holding Toledo and were deployed in battle formation around it. The Ohio scouts reported the formation, and the Ohio men stayed well back.

Mason was on horseback, dashing in and out of General Brown's camp, and responding to the cheers of the men. He took a subtle part in the game himself. He wrote to Ike Rowland, newly promoted to colonel:

"Colonel Rowland: Have all the ammunition forwarded by tomorrow's boat. Do not forget the six-pounder. We have balls here. Mason."

This sinister-sounding dispatch promptly found its way into enemy hands, as Mason no doubt expected. The records do not mention any six-pounder, and he probably didn't have one and wouldn't have known what to do with it if he had. But the letter sounded mighty confident. It served its purpose.

South of Maumee Bay, the Ohio forces were dubious. They were not as anxious to invade Michigan as they had been. They were outnumbered, and apparently bewildered to find themselves opposed to a formidable army and a fleet of transports, when they had expected to find a sheriff's posse. On Sunday, September 6th, the situation was extremely tense. If a sudden shot had been fired, a massacre would certainly have resulted. The Ohio commanders reviewed their instructions. They were to proceed to Toledo, and there hold a session of the Lucas County court, and produce witnesses and records to testify that said session has indeed been held.

About midnight that night a party of cloaked horsemen might have been seen filing slowly and silently past the sleeping Michigan troops. It was composed of the judge of the new court, his bailiff, the reporter, the sheriff and various witnesses.

Like so many ghosts they slipped into the slab town of Toledo. They found a building that was empty, and gained entrance. Carefully blacking out the windows, they lighted a tallow dip and proceeded to hold a court session. By three o'clock in the morning the clerk had finished writing the record, the dip was snuffed out, and they cautiously returned to the street.

Someone remembered that there was an inn near by. Was anybody thirsty? What a question, they muttered. They awoke the landlord and made him come down and open the bar. He filled big mugs of good Toledo beer. The party was just at the "here's how" stage when some local yokel with a sense of humor burst in and bellowed at the top of his lungs that the "Michiganders" were coming. The court cast took off from there in all directions, through the windows and out of the back door.

For four days the Michigan forces were unaware that Governor Lucas had outwitted them. They were drilling, cheering, yelling obscenities at the muttering Ohio men. More than two thousand strong, they were eating all the stored food of farmers for miles around. Everybody was having a good time, until September 10th.

On that day, Mason was riding a black horse around the drill area about noon, while the marching men were forming up for a formal review. The ranks were finally quiet, when a dramatic coincidence occurred. A mounted messenger dashed up, horse and rider breathless. "Sir, a message from Washington." Mason's hand was steady as he ripped open the large sealed envelope. His classic features betrayed no emotion.

Then he held up his hand for silence.

"Men," he announced. "I'm not Governor any more. This letter says I've been removed for being too zealous in Michigan's cause."

In utter, supine silence the men blinked at him, openmouthed. He was seen to hand the reins of his horse to an orderly, dismount, and stride into General Brown's tent. Before anyone could think of anything to say, the General emerged.

"You're all dismissed," he said. "The war's over. Go home."

That was the end of the Toledo War.

General Cass said that Jackson had "tears in his eyes" when he signed the removal order. Cass said further that he walked up and down, shouting at "that young hotspur governor" who had gotten him in such a predicament. The letter let young Mason down very gently indeed by reminding him that since Porter's death there had been no regularly-appointed governor, and that the President had let matters drift along because he did not like to fill such an important post by a recess appointment. But now Congress was in session again and would shortly recommend a new Governor. Jackson had appointed John Scott Horner, of Warrenton, Virginia, to Mason's post, and removed Mason so that Horner might have a free hand to select his own policies.

Mason quickly discovered that this peace offering cost the President a high price. Ohio was immediately mollified by Mason's removal, but no able Democrat could be found who was willing to follow the popular figure of the Boy Governor on the Michigan stage. Most of them realized that the appointment was only temporary, and would terminate with the admittance of Michigan as a State. Those to whom it was offered quickly turned it down, adding to Jackson's embarrassment. Mason heard from one such potential appointee, Charles Shaler, of Pittsburgh, but did not know who Horner was. No one had ever heard of him. Apparently he filled the bill; an unknown, a Democrat, and a man who didn't read the newspapers.

Detroit was going wild. Some stores were draped in mourning; others were treating all comers to free beer. Banquets were held in every hotel in town, all toasting Mason and passing laudatory resolutions. Mason's mere appearance on the street was the signal for a crowd to gather and cheers to follow him. The Council passed a special resolution hailing him as a hero. The leading citizens of the city gathered at the Mansion House to honor him, presenting him with an engraved scroll which commended him for the "able and satisfactory manner

in which he had discharged his office since his appointment", and testifying to the citizens' "high sense of gratitude". The same man, David C. McKinstry, who had led the mass meeting against him at the time of his appointment, now headed the testimonial committee. All the clubs were holding "victory" dinners, and making up rhymes about Mason and his adventures with Lucas. One of them, well-remembered, went like this:

"Old Lucas gave his orders all for to hold a court.

But Stevens Thomson Mason he thought he'd have some sport.

He called upon the Wolverines and asked them for to go

To meet the rebel Lucas, his court to overthrow."

There were about twenty verses, describing the ridiculous adventures in the so-called war. It was Mason's great day. He was the greatest popular figure the Territory had ever produced.

CHAPTER VII

LITTLE JACK HORNER

I

THE NEWS OF Horner's appointment as Acting Governor of Michigan Territory was spread from town to town by tolling bells and funeral-draped wagons. For several days the citizens couldn't understand it. Andy Jackson was the great national hero of the period, just as Stevens T. Mason was the dominant personality of the Territory. Friction between them, culminating in angry words and abrupt dismissal, was something that just couldn't happen. In the Pioneer and Historical Collection files are old letters from wrinkled septuagenarians who told of their stunned astonishment when the saw news came. To some of them, names like Jackson and Mason belonged together and stood for the same kind of leader. Citizens of the hamlets met in the public squares, and at the homes of the chief citizen, wondering what the world was coming to.

It occurred to many of them that elections weren't very far off, and Michigan thus had a chance to make things up to Mason. He had been the victim, and had taken it like a man. But he was a sacrifice to an ideal: he represented their wishes and their feelings. What had happened to him came about because he chose to be loyal to them rather than to the man who had originally appointed him. So, inevitably, Mason had been punished—humiliated by the wily Mr. Butler—for championing the plain people. But the great day was coming! They were going to elect a Governor pretty soon. That would be the day they'd tell the Boy Governor how much they admired his pluck and gumption in telling off old Lucas.

Gossip between neighbors waiting for the cascade of golden grain to pour into the grist-mill hopper, to be exchanged for

sacks of flour; talk in the village store, and on the veranda of the pillared courthouse—the voices of the plain people, telling of their fondness for Mason and their feeling of obligation. There would be prematurely old farmers, holding up a Baltimore or New York paper to the feeble glow of a tallow dip and reading therein, by the miracle of the Federal post road only two weeks late, that Mason's plight had aroused deep feeling in the East. Michigan men in Washington wrote to the little rural weeklies that Mason was the universal topic there, and that everyone was looking to Jackson for an explanation.

The aged President had nothing to say. Neither had Governor Lucas. Maps were pored over in the Surveyor General's office, and a basis for a land settlement with Michigan worked out, as a compensation for the impending loss of the "Toledo Strip". Jackson well knew, from the volume of correspondence pouring in, that Michigan was going ahead with statehood plans regardless of his advice, or Cass's. He could have stopped Mason's share in it with a word, but he preferred to keep silent. A big showdown was coming up in Congress, and Jackson decided to stay neutral.

In Washington sat Lucius Lyon, Michigan's voteless delegate. To his office came Senator Preston of South Carolina, a politician who had been one of the ringleaders in the anti-Michigan Congressional bloc. It was too bad, opined the Senator, but that was politics for you; always two sides, and impossible to satisfy everyone. But Michigan stood to gain a very practical reward if things didn't go too far—yes sir, a very practical reward. Lyon ought to write Mason and advise him, in defining the borders of his new State, to concede the "Toledo Strip" to Ohio but to claim as compensation a vast timbered wilderness north of Mackinac and encompassing the whole southern shore of Lake Superior. All the land included in a tremendous triangle formed by Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the Menominee River would be granted to the new State as a bonus for keeping quiet and not raising a fuss over Governor Lucas's occupation of Toledo.

As a compensation for the priceless harbor area and river

highway at Toledo, such a proposal was insulting. The Senator felt secure enough to offer it anyway, in the name of his bloc of colleagues who were fighting for Lucas in Congress, knowing that Lyon couldn't do much about it. Lyon indifferently wrote of the offer to Governor Mason at Detroit, saying that in his opinion the only beneficial result to Michigan of this offer was the hint that, if accepted, it would lead to the removal of the Territorial government from Detroit and the establishment of a new Territory of Wisconsin across the lake.

In Detroit, Mason paced his hearthrug at home, and pondered. He sought out old Indian reports of the region, which were vague. He talked to Henry Schoolcraft and a few old pioneers who had been up there. They advised against including the area in the new State; it was entirely wild and could never be adapted to settlement. In taking it, Schoolcraft said, the State would have to drop all claim to the "Toledo Strip" in exchange for a series of mountain ranges with deep, inaccessible valleys which would need a small army of marshals, surveyors, administrators and road builders merely to control. Mason believed it could not be settled during his lifetime and probably not within that of the following generation.

During this period of indecision, more letters came. Mr. Lyon was showing considerable interest, not to say enthusiasm, for the venture. He had heard that the unknown land was a rich virgin timber and hunting area, with easy transport on Lake Superior and up the river to most parts of it. It was a whole new frontier, ready for exploitation. "I, for one," he remarked, "shall go in for all the country Congress will give us, west of the lakes. We will take advantage of it and let the Devil take the hindmost, as the gamesters say. We can raise our own Indians for all time to come, and even a little bear meat for delicacy."

Mason had a feeling that Lucius Lyon knew something about this area that he did not want to describe too fully. Whatever it was—future fishing revenue, rich contracts with Astor's Northwest Fur Company which controlled the trading post at Mackinac Island, or perhaps mining in the mountains—Lyon knew

something no one in Michigan then understood. Washington was a good place to pick up inside information of that kind. Lyon kept referring to this proposed grant as the "Upper Peninsula of Michigan" in his correspondence. It was nothing of the kind; neither a peninsula nor upper. It was a stretch of land between the Mississippi and Lake Michigan, bordered on the north by Lake Superior. The southernmost tip of the area came well down the western shore of Lake Michigan, almost to the settlement at Green Bay. For convenience sake Mason adopted the term, and it remained.

Engrossed as he was in the obstetrics of Michigan's birth, Mason had forgotten that he was just a private citizen, out of power. Everyone had been calling him Governor Mason since the Toledo skirmish, and he indeed felt that he was in fact Governor—of what, he could not have said. On September 19, 1835, he was yanked back to the realities of the situation by the arrival of John S. Horner, the new Acting Governor of the Territory.

Carpetbag in hand and a sour expression on his round face, Horner made his way immediately to the vacated office in the capitol building occupied so long by Mason. No one paid the slightest attention to him, even after he had announced himself several times to the staff. He was there, he said, as the representative of the Federal government and here was his letter of appointment. He was now taking command. No one appeared to have heard him. Horner was a short fellow, middle-aged, stout and double-chinned. He had a rasping, martinet quality which grated on people. When he finally was forced to call at Mason's home and ask for a formal introduction to his office force, Mason at once thought him opinionated and stuffy. But perhaps the young Moses' opinion was biased.

Horner impressed Detroit as a stuffed shirt, and was coldly ignored. No doubt he was doing all anyone could in a situation like that, but it required someone with a hide like a rhinoceros to survive the treatment that "Little Jack Horner" received. Horner had only one influential friend, John Forsyth, Jackson's

Secretary of State, who had gotten him appointed. To Forsyth, Horner began pouring out his woes in a flood of self-pitying letters, which began with the statement that there was no authority of any kind in Detroit when he arrived and that he had to "take command" at once even though it was late in the evening when he found the capitol building.

He was a bridegroom of only seven months. Mrs. Horner, who was with him, was a sweet, demure little thing who was immediately mothered by all the Detroit society matrons and became the center of much clucking fuss. At the same time her husband was outrageously insulted at every possible opportunity. On September 24th he and Mrs. Horner were introduced to society at a banquet in the American Hotel. He was booed; she was applauded. He went alone to a meeting at the Detroit City Hall, and addressed a public meeting of leading citizens. They adopted, and presented him with, a set of resolutions in fancy terms which told him to go back to Virginia and stay there. Horner became irritated, which in a figure of his physical rotundity, made him appear ridiculous. Then he was infuriated.

His letters to Forsyth are essays in futility; they constitute a ready-made plot for a novel about a man's inability to understand himself or his environment. He wrote that he was going to pardon all the persons arrested by Michigan in the Toledo War, except Two Stinckney. He was going to show these rude provincials that they couldn't high-pressure *him*. He didn't care what they thought. A wholesale pardoning, furthermore, would be popular with the Congressional bloc and might be what the Administration would like from him. "I fear the results will be unsavory to some extent," he remarked. It was a masterpiece of understatement.

When he set about freeing all the Ohio trespassers from Michigan jails, everyone in the Territory immediately concluded that he had been sent out from Washington to undo all of Mason's work and play into Governor Lucas's wily hands. He was openly accused in the newspapers of being a Lucas tool and working against Michigan. A riot developed at the

scene of the late Toledo War which got out of hand and threatened to take up where the War left off, and be as bloody as the War wasn't. Horner, full of the dignity of his position, mounted a horse and rode thither in person. That colossal blunder ruined his prestige in Mason's estimation.

"I went down there to speak with them, and to turn the lion in their natures into the gentleness of the lamb," he reported to Forsyth. "My condition was this: at Monroe, the seat of the strife, amidst a wild and dangerous population, without any aid, a friend, a servant or a bed to sleep in, in the midst of a mob excited by the enemies of the administration and bad men, I could not enlist a friend as an officer of the Territory. How was my authority to be enforced or the government in my hands respected under the circumstances? A design was formed against my honor and my life. The district attorney had the effrontery to say that if he acted, the mob would throw him and myself into the river."

They booed, yelled, threw clods of dirt at him, and waved him off the steps of the Monroe courthouse while he was trying to speak.

"I tried conciliation," Horner wrote. "I tried entreaty, appeals to their patriotism, indeed every resort but force which I should not have been able to obtain had I desired it. There was never a government in Christendom with such officers, civil and military, and filled with such doctrines as Michigan."

The district attorney, Mr. James Q. Adams of Monroe, warned Horner to get off the platform and spur his horse out of there before the mob began throwing something more pungent than clods of dirt. Mr. Adams was so nervous that he thought he could smell tar simmering and feathers burning that very moment, and wanted no part of that deal. He angrily told Horner that he was quitting, as of then, and undoubtedly added some advice as to what Horner could do with the job. Whereupon he went home. Horner pleaded with him to stay, and called after him that he wouldn't accept his resignation.

"I would have accepted," he complained to Forsyth, "but no counsellor in Michigan would accept the office in either

federal or territorial courts, for the reason that all of them are looking forward to office under the new state government on the first day of November next."

The Monroe mob fumed and began making hostile noises when Horner shouted that he was going to free the prisoners. Some of them milled toward him and he had just time to scurry off the stone steps and mount his steed, on which he made an inglorious exit toward Detroit. The crowd shouted at him that if he came back they'd have a welcome committee with a rail for him to ride on. Horner, not answering, galloped off.

He plodded along the road and reached Ypsilanti late at night. Tired and disgusted, he went immediately to bed at an inn. In the wee hours of the morning, word of what he had attempted at Monroe filtered into the town. Citizens gathered beneath his window, at first by twos and threes, but soon they were coming from all directions. Their angry voices awoke the sleeping Horner. He got out of bed and tiptoed to the window.

A rock thumped up against the wall not a foot from the glass panes. Below, the crowd was noisily asking each other where a fence rail could be found. Horner popped back in bed, terrified. The whole guest list at the inn where he was staying was aroused now, demanding to know what in Tunket was going on down thar. . . . The landlord was worried about the mob and was hanging out an upper window, soothing them. "Now, boys. Please, now!"

The boys didn't find a fence rail and contented themselves with pelting the wooden walls with rocks, clods and blobs of filth, meanwhile shouting their opinion of Horner at the top of their voices. In the morning the landlord billed him for the damage.

"Respectable people," comments an account of this episode, "deprecated such conduct. The Whig papers seized on it as a direct result of Democratic precepts and practices. Horner was subjected to the indignity of an old-time charivari." In Detroit, a resolution introduced into the Council by the Whigs attempted to sympathize with Horner, and expressed regret

that he should be subjected to this brand of treatment. It was beaten, thirty-one to five votes.

Horner was a man who wouldn't learn. He was aghast at this outbreak of hostility toward him, but he was determined to tame these wild pioneers and whack them with every administrative bludgeon he could find. He was going to cut them down to his size and make them like it. He did neither; he never succeeded in these punitive countermeasures, and Michigan surely did not like it. If Andy Jackson had combed the country to find a man who could enhance Mason's towering popularity even more, he could not have found a better man than Horner.

He stubbornly refused to admit the fact that the State government was getting under way all about him. He did not recognize it, therefore it did not exist. In the capitol building he was elbowed out of the way while workmen changed the signs on all the doors and moved bulky cabinets from one office to another. Polling places were decided upon. Registration of voters was under way by midsummer; by early fall it was nearly complete.

Mason did not add to Horner's embarrassment by colliding with him in the narrow capitol corridors. As soon as he had taken Horner's mental measure and grinned inwardly at what he found, Mason packed up and went to New York. He thought it would be just as well to be out of the way while Horner was battling Michigan's outraged feelings, and in addition he needed a vacation. So the glitteringly handsome youth, not yet twenty-four, made the rounds of fashionable tailors where he aroused their usual admiration while being measured for resplendent new costumes; he visited family friends of importance; met Washington Irving for the first time, and through him was introduced to swanky New York society. New York was well aware of the Mason legend even then. The city lionized him. He was interviewed by reporters and formally invited to great homes. Richard M. Johnson, a friend of John T. Mason and a famous character in the War of 1812, took him in tow and introduced him to Tammany.

The anniversary of the Battle of the Thames, Colonel Johnson's most successful exploit, happened to fall on the very day when Michigan would be trooping to the polls to elect its first Governor and State administration. Johnson invited him to a banquet at Tammany Hall on that evening, and Mason showed so little concern for the outcome that he consented to stay. Johnson had been announced as the principal speaker, but he said he thought Mason ought to say a few words.

As the people of Michigan marched to the polls on October 5, 1835, Mason was receiving a flattering reception at the old Tammany Hall. He quickly became the center of attention, and his few words, amplified by quick extemporizing into a full-length address, dominated the meeting. Afterward, said Johnson, Tammany rose to its feet and applauded. It was nothing compared to the applause Mason received in Michigan.

He was in by a landslide. Election day and the day following, the 6th, were holidays throughout Michigan by nobody's proclamation, merely by common agreement. At every settlement and frontier town they came, on horseback and in buckboard wagons; they swarmed to crossroads churches and township halls; they assembled with their sunbonneted women and their pans of johnnycake and baked beans. And they voted for Mason. In Detroit, bonfires blazed all night in the Campus Martius while impromptu parades kept everyone awake across the city. They yelled Mason's name, their shouts echoed by the thumping of drums and the roar of voices.

Mason received 7,508 votes, compared with 814 for his closest rival. That was more than all the other aspirants' totals added together. His whole ticket went in with him—a top-heavy majority in each House of the Legislature and all his elected officials whom he had sponsored. Edward Mundy, his Lieutenant Governor, polled about the same proportion as Mason himself. The constitution he had worked over, on so many long winter nights, went in by a vote of 6,299 to 1,359. Far out in the townships, returns dribbled in. The new counties of Clinton, Ionia, Kent and Ottawa forwarded only ninety votes, but all but six were for Mason and his Democrats.

Where were the Whigs? Where was Woodbridge? The old schemer, too wily to get his feet caught in a bear trap, had boycotted the election. The Whigs held a party caucus at which Woodbridge explained that he did not think the action of the people in setting up a State government should be considered legal until it had the consent of Congress. This transparent alibi saved the Whig face, whiskers and all, and was accepted as the only way out of a resounding defeat and a serious blow to Whig influence.

The State Senate now had sixteen members and the House had forty-nine, mostly loyal Mason Democrats. The party's candidate for the unrecognized seat in Congress, Isaac Crary of Marshall, polled over 6,000 votes more than his only competitor.

Quite calmly, hoping not to be noticed in the Mason excitement, Woodbridge had entered his own name for the post of Delegate to Congress from the Territorial areas across the lake, which was being decided at the same time in the Wisconsin area. Mason's choice for the post had been George W. Jones, of Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Jones represented the area, and it was agreed that when Michigan began operating under the new constitution, he was to become the official delegate at Washington.

First returns indicated a slight Whig lead. Woodbridge immediately demanded a certificate of election. As the returns kept coming in during the next few days, the Whig lead dwindled, then disappeared. Jones, too, had won. Mason's sweep was complete. He was the first Governor of Michigan, and to a degree never equalled since he was the personal ruler of the State. About that time he observed his twenty-fourth birthday.

Mail, which travelled at night, could reach Washington several days ahead of a passenger leaving Detroit at the same time. The news of the illegal, precedent-shattering election reached

Washington so fast that Mason had hardly started homeward before Congress was viewing with alarm. Tongues were wagging. Politicians asked timidly what Ohio would think; how would Governor Lucas react to Mason's assumption of almost dictatorial power only a few weeks after they had shut him up by removing him?

Mason didn't care what Governor Lucas thought. Immediately upon arrival he sent copies of the new constitution to the President, to the Cabinet Secretaries and to Congress for study. Upon that constitution and upon proof that the population minimum had been far exceeded, he based his demand for immediate recognition as a State. He wrote to Lucius Lyon and remarked that he had fulfilled every condition, answered every question and satisfied every requirement, including the flat acceptance of the Upper Peninsula and the abandonment of all claims to the "Toledo Strip". Now, he said. Now! He wanted statehood now!

Of course, replied Lyon, such a demand was just a gesture. The election of a Representative and the appointment of two Senators left Mason in the same position as before, since none of them could be seated and therefore Michigan had no voice in Congress. He himself, said Lyon, was no longer Territorial Delegate and there was no one who could speak for the State.

Mason didn't care about that. He reminded Lyon that he himself was to become one of the two Senators, and that during the interval before his appointment he could act as the State's Washington representative. Soon afterward, Mason predicted, formal admission would be obtained.

Both Mason and Lyon were happy, after the election of 1835. The Michigan constitution arrived and was proudly exhibited around Washington. It was received with lavish praise. The President himself was pleased. The document was the work of the Constitutional Convention, which had worked all winter on it. Mason, as a Federal officer, had not been a member of the Convention, but he had attended all the meetings and had inspired its more democratic provisions. It was

largely his work, and incorporated his ideas. It stood for his definition of the term "popular government".

Most democratic of all State constitutions, Michigan's was at the same time the most socialistic. It provided for State ownership and operation of public utilities like railroads and canals; it set up State-supervised schools everywhere, and authorized the creation of a giant State University which, to Mason's nimble mind, was destined to become an important center of higher education. The constitution, in addition, set up machinery for widespread State employment which reminds us strongly of the late WPA.

Under its provisions every male citizen over the age of twenty-one had a vote, regardless of property qualifications or party registry. The Supreme Court and the county courts were made into an interlocking chain of judicial fortresses, protecting the population against the whims and errors of the local justices of the peace. Only two officers besides the Governor and Lieutenant Governor required popular election and thus a political background: members of Congress and of the Legislature. All the rest were appointive, and two of them required confirmation by both Houses of the Legislature: the State Treasurer and the Superintendent of Public Instruction—showing Mason's emphasis on his school program.

All elective officers served for terms of two years. Again, this is Mason's idea of militant democracy at work. He believed that these officers should represent very closely the sentiment of the people. Throughout the constitution there is constant evidence of Mason's sincere desire to let the people rule; to make it easy for them to give voice to their approval or disapproval through frequent elections and referendums.

He was dealing, in 1835, with a thinly settled peninsula, crisscrossed by poor wagon trails and studded here and there with new slab-pine towns. He was conscious of how the pioneers felt about concentrated power, and that most of the emigrants had come to Michigan to escape that very situation in the East. He thought they would discuss their community problems

in town meetings with dignity, and that they would forever distinguish between liberty and uncontrolled license. He credited his people, that is, with his own nobility of character. He never made a graver error.

This handing over of political power to the liberty-loving citizen was a wide-open invitation to politicians to usurp it, and to crooks to pervert the meaning of his liberality. Gleefully the people adopted it and voted him into office to put his utopian theories into practice.

The Convention had set the Governor's salary at two thousand dollars per year, paid quarterly, with an expense account for travel on State business. It was a generous raise from the twelve hundred he had been receiving as Territorial Secretary. Besides, he was no longer bearing the whole expense of the family's support. His father was contributing occasionally, and helping even more by inviting Mary Mason and the girls to visit him for several weeks at a time at the Saint Charles Hotel in New Orleans, then his base of operations. Mason, with relief, saw himself approaching a financial position which would justify him in thinking, at least, of getting married someday.

His immediate problem was something like a wedding without a honeymoon. He was about to be inaugurated Governor at a big public celebration, scheduled for November 2, 1835. He knew that when he mounted the rostrum to take his oath of office he would be giving Congress a figurative kick in the pants which would bring down upon him the official wrath of the Administration. It was a bit of political nose-thumbing so audacious that it was covered by reporters from many large Eastern newspapers as well as by all the Michigan weeklies regardless of party sympathy. For a day he would become the center of national attention. He prepared for it accordingly.

The newsworthy phase of Mason's situation was not the existence of the State government, but the way Mason had brought it into existence. Michigan was the next to the last of the great bites of land organized as the Northwest Territory in 1787 to clear the barriers and enter statehood. Her real development was held up until the opening of the Erie Canal

and the appearance of excellent steamboats on the Lakes. Then, after 1825, her influx of population began. In ten years, Michigan had changed from a virtual wilderness of unexplored forests and swamps to a thriving agricultural area of more than 90,000 population and dozens of chartered towns and villages. Michigan was ready for statehood and should have been admitted long before.

Other States had politely applied for admission and had entered the Union like invited guests, through the front door. Michigan was like a burglar jimmying the back window. Michigan was forever plotting, threatening, embarrassing her sister States and demanding her rights. Thrown out by an indignant Congress, Michigan was back again with a ticket called a constitution, by which it once more demanded admission. Congress, like an indignant hostess, told Michigan to wait in the woodshed while a family conference was held to decide what to do.

On November 2, 1835, Michigan had two separate and antagonistic forms of government. Horner's legal Territorial government had no authority, but Mason's operating State government had no legality. This put the United States of America in a position not only embarrassing, but challenging. The youth who had succeeded in creating this unprecedented situation and who, in spite of being a "stripling", an "adolescent Adonis", a "Boy Governor", and other newspaper epithets, had clung to power under both regimes, now found himself famous.

Detroit felt as if a circus was in town on Inauguration Day. Throngs of people lined the sidewalks, peering intently up and down the streets as if wondering when the parade would come along. Various accounts of the ceremonies found their way into the Pioneer and Historical Collection, and the newspapers were explicit in their descriptions. The details are so well recorded that Mason might have been inaugurated yesterday, so fresh and realistic is the scene we see.

We see the Governor, "his face singularly strong and handsome," his eyes in animation seeming to change from blue to

gray, "while from a forehead broad and high was brushed at times in seemingly aimless fashion a mass of wavy dark-brown hair. The blush of youth was in his cheeks, and the vigor of young years was disclosed in the alert and active movement of his well-nourished frame." He was four days past his twenty-fourth birthday, and never looked as impressive as he did on that day.

He came out of his narrow little house on Jefferson and took his place in an open carriage. Before him rode a troop of cavalry in plumes and crossed white belts. The Michigan militia under Colonel Ike Rowland formed ranks behind him. As he set out, he was cheered. Crowds farther down Jefferson heard this cheering and set up a similar clamor when the carriage passed them. Mason kept doffing his stovepipe hat to the crowd. As he turned at Jefferson and entered Woodward, the crowds lining that wide thoroughfare took up the cry and passed it along, cheering and applauding until the carriage turned at Michigan Avenue and the Campus Martius for the short remainder of the route to the capitol building.

The hoop-skirted and poke-bonneted ladies on the wooden sidewalks waved tiny handkerchiefs. Men in draped tail coats and stovepipe hats shouted. Mason bowed. At the capitol, the carriage swung around the muddy dirt driveway and stopped. Once more he waved as he stood up to dismount and enter the building. He was seen to be wearing a black broadcloth evening suit, with starched lace ruffles at the cuffs. His gleaming expanse of stiff white shirt bosom was surmounted by a high black satin neckstock around a still-higher collar which thrust twin starched points around his chin. Mason's trousers were complete with the bootstraps under the instep which were standard equipment with those extremely tight, form-fitting garments, a practical device to keep them from climbing up the wearer's leg. His wide-notched coat lapels were of black silk, and the way those tails draped in a straight line to the knee was a testimonial to the tailor's art.

The cruel high-pointed collar kept his neck up and chin high, as in a vise. Coupled with that heavily starched dress shirt

front, he probably could not have looked down or bent over. Fortunately, no poodle came along for him to trip over. His heavy silk hat was worn straight upon his head, tilted fashionably a little to the right; his long gold-headed cane was under his arm and white silk gloves on his dainty, long-fingered hands. Instead of the familiar three-valanced broadcloth opera cloak he had been so fond of wearing, Mason appeared for his inaugural draped in a pure white fluffy-wool blanket, with a long, rustling silken fringe dangling from it. People were wearing them in New York instead of overcoats, and Mason followed the fashion. It was the forerunner of the famous shawl that Lincoln wore. Standing there on the capitol steps, head up and smiling, one hand clutching this blanket and the other raised high with his huge hat and stick, Mason was the handsomest public figure of his time. The occasion cried for the familiar Press Graphic and the too-familiar press photographer of today, who should have left us a camera record of the event.

He went inside and greeted his colleagues, then reappeared on the capitol portico between the high stone pillars. He held up his hand. He said that his regular inaugural address was to be delivered the following day, but he could not appear for the oath of office without thanking them all, yes, everyone, for having helped to bring their State into being. If they would wait, he said, the entire administrative staff would reappear after the ceremony of oath-taking, so that the people could see them. Most of them were unknown to the public. That was where Detroit editors received a shock. Out came Kintsing Pritchette, Mason's drinking pal. He was introduced as the new Secretary of State. Flanking the Governor on the other side stood the tall, broad-shouldered Ed Mundy of Ann Arbor, the Lieutenant Governor. Clean-shaven, friendly, brilliant of intellect and slow to take offense even from the quarrelsome Whigs, Ed was the ideal foil for Mason's effervescent enthusiasm.

In the line stood Ezra Convis of Calhoun County, the new Speaker of the House; Isaac Crary, the lone Congressman-at-

large (so called because apparently there was no place to put him) ; Reverend John D. Pierce, Superintendent of Public Instruction; John J. Adam, chief clerk of the capitol. The crowd gazed at them curiously. None save Pritchette was well known. Pritchette was the topic of considerable speculation. People wondered just how much influence Mason's "torts and toddy society" was going to wield in the new government. Pritchette probably was aware of this scrutiny. Not long afterward, a wave of antagonism swept through the Legislature directed against the so-called Detroit influence surrounding Mason, and swaying him away from matters brought up by the rural legislators.

This friction was not long in manifesting itself. Mason felt it even as he stood before the flag-decorated rostrum in the House chamber the following day, delivering his inaugural address. The hall was jammed with legislators, reporters, inquisitive small-town officials and plain people who had made incredible journeys, in some cases, to squeeze in and become suffocated in a corner merely to say they had heard the "Boy Governor" speak. The little rosewood rostrum had a bunting canopy over it, and the Constitution of Michigan lying on its well-rubbed surface. Mason stood at one side in full view of the audience, his fingertips resting lightly on the edge of the rostrum and gesturing occasionally with the other hand. When Alvin Smith was commissioned to paint Mason's official State portrait he posed him in the same costume against this identical background. The famed canvas which has so inspired Mason's century-long list of successors in the gubernatorial chair depicts him as he was delivering this address. He looks confident, wholly at ease, and happy.

He spoke for an hour. His voice was "full-rounded, and had the charm of persuasion if it lacked the command of eloquence". He pulled out all the stops and filled his address with long-syllabled profundities which no doubt sounded very dignified and impressive, but must have sent the rural delegation scurrying for the dictionary. It is heavy going for the modern reader,

plowing through it in printed form. It must have sounded ponderous to the audience, but words like those coming from the lips of a virtual adolescent must have filled their hearts with pride. The gist of the address was that he was grateful, that he felt he had been called to the office to do a difficult job, and that he would follow his usual custom and call on his elders for advice.

"Summoned by the general voice of my fellow-citizens to the station of chief executive magistrate of the State of Michigan," he began, "it is with feelings which language is inadequate to express that I embrace the occasion to convey to them my cordial thanks for the distinguished testimony of their approbation and confidence."

He declined to take any bows for the Toledo War, but remarked that "it would not become me to refer to the incident in a spirit of dissatisfaction." (Chuckles) He was conscious that the cares before him were beyond his ability; he said he had consulted his capacity less, probably, than the "impulses of a premature ambition". (Cries of "Go to it, boy!") Never mind, Mason continued. This was not a one-man show. He was merely the co-ordinator between the various departments, which would get the job done. These, with the "intelligence and virtue of the people", were guarantees that the foundations of the State were laid in the correct principles, and that it would prosper. He went into detail about the liberalism of the Constitution, which he said set a precedent among the States and would be closely watched. There was the Territorial government question to be solved; the presence in Washington of a Congressman and two Senators without credentials—a dozen or more sources of friction with the Federal government. For these and other reasons he promised not to sponsor any radical legislation or to indulge in any more capers which would give the new State a poor send-off. Nothing of a permanent or revolutionary nature ought to be brought up until the State was admitted.

He invoked the help of God to set the State on the right

path, and prayed for the "friendship and approbation of the Nation". The address ended, and the audience cheered, then rushed up the aisle to shake his hand.

The address did not sound like Mason; it was too conservative. He wrote it, but it was an evidence of his changing personality. The liberalism he mentioned was indeed a precedent among the States; the intelligence and virtue of the people were qualities he merely hoped for, and trusted in, yet he had hung the entire success of this gigantic enterprise on a slender thread of belief in the goodness of his people. If they were good, and generous, and noble, Michigan would prosper. If they turned out to be rascals, they would bring Mason crashing down with them.

Yet it was equally clear that he was throwing himself wholeheartedly into the fight to get them what they wanted. He did not lack for enthusiasm, energy or ability. He enjoyed an almost hysterical popularity. The Legislature was solidly with him. There was no reason apparent to Michigan citizens why his inauguration should not usher in an era of lush prosperity beyond anything they had known.

Hardly had the bunting been removed from the rostrum and the new House called to order than the city versus county feud became apparent. Having no minority party to bicker with, the solons began to bicker among themselves over the slate of nominations submitted to them for the two posts of United States Senator. All factions had agreed long ago upon Lucius Lyon, leaving only one post to fill. Mason was anxious to bestow the toga upon another of his barroom buddies, Colonel John Norvell, Postmaster of Detroit. Immediately a howl broke out from the rural delegations. They wanted John Biddle of Pontiac, who was a rural constituent through and through, a reluctant visitor to Detroit and a prosperous farmer. He had been president of the Constitutional Convention, had been the only opponent to Mason in the State election, and had come to personify the opposition to Mason's rapidly forming "torts and toddy society" of Detroiters.

On the first ballot, Norvell and Biddle tied. On the second,

they tied again. On the third, Biddle sprang into the lead with a tie in the House but a majority of ten votes to six in the Senate. The Senate continued to support him but Biddle was beaten on successive votes in the house—thirty-five to twenty-eight. Norvell was certified the winner. The Senate muttered. This was the beginning of fifteen years of constant city versus county feuding in the Legislature, climaxed by an abrupt removal of the whole State government to a remote and unsettled forest in Ingham County (Lansing) just to get it away from Detroit.

Mason's popularity did not suffer, but the seeds of disaffection had been sown. On this disappointing note, Michigan's State government began.

3

Some business lots on the lower end of Jefferson Avenue sold in 1835 for \$150 a foot. Thus, stealthily, while the attention of the people had been centered on Mason, the Toledo War and the election, prosperity turned the corner. Detroit was riding the crest of a boom. Real estate was changing hands in a manner which seems almost Floridian to us. In the 1835 boom, Detroit finally burst out of its narrow boundaries with a ripping noise which was almost drowned out by the jingle of cash changing hands every time another deal was made.

Compressed into its strait-jacket frontage, Detroit had to expand. Wedged between the Cass farm on the west and the Baubien farm on the east, the budding metropolis was pushing its 6,927 inhabitants right around these barriers and depositing them in colonies up and down the river, in the "commons", between remnants of the old French farms and even as far away as Grosse Ile. In 1835 the city presented a patchwork appearance, with the old die-hard French farms seeming to run backward from the river right through residential areas. The Baubiens could not hold out forever, and in 1834 their farm had become a street and a row of houses. The next street was named for their patron saint, St. Antoine. Jefferson Avenue

burst out of the wooden gates at Brush Street which had been there since 1812, and houses rose upon the cow pasture east of St. Antoine which Mason had seen when he arrived in 1830. In 1835, Jefferson Avenue stretched eastward for nearly a mile from Woodward. Graceful homes of the first families arose there.

The bullet-scarred old mansion of General Cass continued to defy Detroit to encroach west of the Mansion House. At Cass Street, the property line, there was a gate and a path leading into the orchard, facing Fort and Lafayette Streets, which General Cass had developed as a sort of city park. The mansion stood on the riverbank facing a road which is known now as West Jefferson, and the river lay directly below a sharp cliff on the far side of this road. It had a private pier.

The house, constructed originally of foot-thick logs, was sheathed with an outer layer of siding which disguised its original purpose. It was a fortress, built for protection against Indian raids and occupied by General Wayne as a military headquarters during the French and Indian Wars preceding the American Revolution. In its impregnable sides lay buried the leaden bullets of the British redcoats and the fire-tipped arrows of the Six Nations warriors. Every military commander until the time of Cass himself had lived there; Cass bought the historic old place and its accompanying 500-acre farm for \$12,000 in 1816 when he was Military Governor. The farm made him independent of city markets for a time, but in 1835 he was Secretary of War in Washington and the proud old citadel was a museum, full of relics of the interminable wars, of old Detroit before the fire of 1805, and of pioneer life in the Territory.

In 1831, following Mason's appointment as Territorial Secretary, Cass had departed for Washington. At that time he offered the land, not including the house, for sale at \$36,000. The house was to stand there forever, as a permanent museum. No one was interested. Four years later, in 1835, buyers came rushing at him with insistent demands for the entire tract, and agreements to move the house elsewhere to save it for the

Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society's headquarters. Cass agreed to allow the old structure to be moved, and sold the property for \$168,000 cash. In the meantime, the purchasers of the Jefferson Avenue property who paid \$150 a foot, resold the same lots for \$285 and \$292 a foot, and the boom was reaching the dimensions of a runaway hysteria.

Cass Street was cut through at once; Fort, Lafayette and Jefferson were projected across the farm, and farther uptown Michigan Avenue now crossed it on a diagonal. From this diagonal, new streets were laid out at right angles, so that downtown Detroit now presents the appearance of a design laid out by a drunken draftsman. Streets go every which way; they date from 1835, when the real-estate speculators suddenly acquired land and laid out streets to suit themselves, wherever they pleased.

Some Mason rooters were giving the Boy Governor credit for all this easy prosperity, but the impersonal record of the Fuller thesis says he had nothing to do with it. Emigration was at its peak. Ninety boatloads of eager settlers arrived in Detroit in the single month of October, 1835. In one day more than one thousand of them arrived in the city. The volume of retail trade, mostly with these new arrivals, was fantastic. The stream of emigrants was literally a stream of gold. Expressions about a "land-office business" were no exaggeration in Mason's Detroit of 1835. Public lands were selling for a dollar, and a dollar and a quarter, per acre, with millions of acres yet unclaimed. The safer, easier and much quicker water route from the East via the Erie Canal and the lake boats was funneling through Detroit the great bulk of traffic destined not only for Michigan, but for the lands far to the west of Chicago. It is scant wonder that in the pre-railroad era this comparatively comfortable route dominated the settlers' migrations, and suddenly enriched Detroit.

Many Detroit merchants made fortunes by dealing with, and for, small stores in the new villages. In return, the village merchants did a wholesale business with Detroit firms. This year, 1835, the official Blois' *Gazeteer* reported that half, if

not two thirds, of Detroit's total trade was with the interior of the State. Ten important forwarding and commission houses led the list. All the principal roads of the State led to Detroit, and through its peculiar peninsular shape, Michigan was barred from much trade with its neighbors. The appalling condition of the roads was the only factor holding back even greater development. More time was needed to ship a wagonload of furniture from Detroit to Niles than the canal and lake trip required from New York.

With the return of prosperity came bigger Detroit municipal appropriations and long-delayed improvements. Not only streets helped to change the city's physical face. There were docks, new buildings. Following the cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1834, investigations of the open sewer paralleling Congress Street led to measures to close it in. Thinking that the drinking water might have been polluted by it, Detroit purchased early in 1836 a private water works company which was trying to process river water and pipe it to homes. The tallow-and-rag lamps mounted on poles that constituted Detroit's only street lights were editorialized about in the *Journal and Courier*, to the effect that a few more lights like those would produce total darkness.

Not much was done, or could be done, in this period about the bottomless mudholes they called streets. Harriet Martineau described the "wooden planks laid on the grass to form a pavement" in the newer sections of town, and described the interest of the Detroit city council in the wood-block system of street-paving being introduced into New York. In 1835 the downtown streets were navigable in wet weather only by the old high-wheeled French pony cart, and in Farmer's *History of Detroit* there is an account of fourteen teams stalled in the mud at one time.

Workmen began immediately to raze the low hill around Cass's log fortress and fill in the riverbank to bring it out to Atwater Street. With the house gone, and the orchard vanishing day by day, the whole skyline of Detroit as seen from the river began to change. Warehouses were lining the shore;

the steep bank was graded into a slope which began at Jefferson Avenue. Up near the terraced, weed-grown site of old Fort Shelby, workmen were cutting a strange-looking path alongside the Territorial Road and Michigan Avenue. They were the advance guard of the new Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad, building a right-of-way on the north side of Michigan to a terminus at the Campus Martius. Mason had to climb over this construction to get from his house to his office. Leading to his capitol was a double-plank walkway from the Griswold Street sidewalk, and a curved driveway describing twin arcs through the mud. Back of the capitol building, in its very shadow, was a boiler shop and a little network of track—the birthplace of the strap-iron rails and the rolling stock for the strange new line.

In his office, trying to concentrate with that infernal *clang-clang* from the railroad shop in his ears, Mason took up his fight for statehood. The Legislature had recessed after its stormy session over the Senatorial appointment. It was early winter, 1835, and both Senators and the lone Congressman were in Washington awaiting the opening of Congress. Norvell wrote Mason that Michigan's bill was not ready. They were given to understand, he said, that it would not be introduced for a long time.

The reason, of course, had scant bearing on the merit of the issue. The next year, 1836, was a national election year and Congress straightway saw Ohio and Indiana members vociferously pointing to the unsettled border question, threatening the President with mass desertion if Ohio's demands were not met, and plotting to use the incident as an election issue. The Ohio bloc in Congress was mostly Whigs, and the furore was an excuse to embarrass Jackson. He sought peace by sending to Congress a copy of the Michigan Constitution, with a note explaining that he had examined it and found it excellent. With that, an Administration supporter introduced a bill to settle the boundary dispute, and upon reaching a settlement, admit Michigan with the southern border described therein. The bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee.

Lucius Lyon wrote disconsolately: "We see scant probability of action before next June." In the Whig papers of Detroit appeared a new demand to reopen the border question, aimed probably at sabotaging the efforts of the Mason appointees. "The Toledo Strip or Nothing!" they bellowed. To which Colonel Norvell replied from Washington: "There are a few who say that if we cannot get what we want, we should take what we can get." Senator Lyon and Congressman Crary endorsed this view. Lyon wrote to Andrew Mack, of Detroit: ". . . In my opinion, within twenty years the addition of the Upper Peninsula will be valued by Michigan at more than forty million dollars, and that even after ten years the State would not dream of selling it for that sum."

They were voices crying in the wilderness. No one in Detroit gave support to their opinions. The Michigan pioneers well knew the back-breaking work they had endured to build their homes in the comparatively civilized regions of southern Michigan. The mere thought of 20,000 square miles of mountains, uninhabited, unsurveyed and roadless—a vast wilderness on the shore of Lake Superior—made them shiver.

Even when it began to appear that only by complete surrender of the "Toledo Strip" would Michigan be admitted, settlers tried to cling to it. Mason knew quite well that the cause was lost. He consulted Dr. Douglass Houghton, who had been north of the Falls of the St. Mary's, and had gazed on Lake Superior. Dr. Houghton, a practicing physician of Detroit, had as an active hobby the science of geology. He had been there gathering rock specimens and exploring. He said it would take a vast fortune to survey the region, but that access to it was quite easy by boat from the southern shore of the lake. The trick was to get a boat up there, around the high wall of white water that constituted the falls and rapids. He thought a ship canal ought to be built there, by the Federal government, as part of the terms of acceptance of the distant region.

Mason thereupon acted on Dr. Houghton's advice. He gave Congress a few hints that Michigan might make a deal for

the Upper Peninsula, on condition that the government build a canal at the Soo. Congress received the idea favorably. They realized that without it, commerce could not develop the remote region for a generation to come.

A detailed, and highly dramatic, account of the troubles experienced by the exploration party, and the friction that slowed construction of the first canal at the Soo, is given by Harlan Hatcher in *The Great Lakes*. Hatcher describes how the United States backed down on the Congressional promise to build the canal and saddled Mason with it; how the United States Army was sent thither as a border patrol and general watchdog of the vital traffic link between the East and the fur areas of the Northwest, and began a series of feuds with the canal builders whom the troops were sent there to protect. The construction crew shot bears for food, and were almost eaten by their big-game targets many a time. They built a slipway and hauled skiffs and barks up the seventeen-foot escarpment with a windlass. With the first appearance of direct contact between Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, even before Mason's canal was finished, an immense boom broke in the Upper Peninsula and it was infested by geologists, fur scouts, fishermen and commercial hunters. The town of Duluth grew four hundred percent within a decade. The first canal brought ore prospectors who discovered the mammoth iron and copper deposits which have made Michigan rich.

Chronologically, this story follows the Mason era, but a glimpse of the far-reaching effects of Mason's decision to build the original Soo Canal ought to be permitted. He had no idea, nor had anyone of his time, that in our generation the Soo Canal would be the busiest waterway in the world and handle more tonnage than either Panama or Suez. By sponsoring it, and insisting upon it as a condition of accepting the Upper Peninsula, he helped to bring this development from the dream stage to reality.

Mason's family was reunited in Detroit during the winter of 1835-36, and he wanted nothing more than personal and political peace. It must have annoyed him as much as any-

one, therefore, when a fight presently broke out over the successor to Colonel Norvell as Postmaster of Detroit. Six or seven Detroiters were clamoring for the post. One of them was Sheldon McKnight, owner of the *Free Press*. He was a personal friend of Lucius Lyon's, and of Mason's. He received their endorsements. But the Whigs were aroused to anger. Woodbridge apparently had plans to manipulate a Whig postmastership out of a Democratic administration. His slim chance of success with this political miracle didn't keep him from inspiring a political plot which was so characteristic of the Michigan Whigs of this period that it should be described.

Mason learned that Mr. McKnight, as were all editors a century ago, had been attacked on the street by some man who didn't like a story in the *Free Press*. This man, whoever he was, swung at McKnight and got a right smart poke in the jaw in return, which laid him flat on the wooden sidewalk. The man's name was never made public, but he died from some entirely different cause a few months later. Nobody said anything. But when Mr. McKnight's name came up as a candidate for appointment as Postmaster, the Whig machine dug up this incident, had the publisher arrested for manslaughter, and called a grand jury. They even packed the grand jury, DeGarmo Jones, a Woodbridge yesman, becoming foreman.

Great was Mason's indignation when this frame-up caused Mr. McKnight to be indicted for manslaughter, and tried for that crime before the State court. A speedy trial promptly exonerated him and he was appointed Postmaster. He never forgot Woodbridge, nor forgave him for this political trick. Mason regarded Woodbridge aghast, his eyes completely open to the kind of man Woodbridge could be. He could see Woodbridge plotting, scheming, waiting patiently to find an excuse to truss up Mason in a similar conspiracy, to frame him on the first pretext, and to pursue him viciously. That was the Whig policy in 1835-36. It must have made Mason nervous.

He tried to forget it on New Year's Day, 1836, when he was the central figure in the Governor's Ball held in his honor at the American Hotel. There, surrounded by his parents and

sisters, he watched the slow procession of the minuet and the faster, more modern schottische, disapproved of by the city's elders. Mason appeared on the dais at the end of the ballroom, in the midst of his family, wearing his inauguration costume. Very handsome he looked in it, too. The Ball was an excuse for all the belles of Detroit society to be present in their billowiest and fanciest silken gowns, and Mason inaugurated the custom of dancing once with each of them, as they were presented by their mothers. He remarked in a letter soon afterward that he would rather be out at "Coon" Ten Eyck's tavern at Dearbornville with the hunting crowd he knew, "where campaigns were planned and policies of State matured, while the bonds of friendship were strengthened by many an act of good fellowship".

4

Things were going wrong in Washington. The State Constitution had been approved. The conditions required by Congress for statehood had been met. Mason had indicated that he was not preparing to defend his previous stand over the southern border, and would be content with whatever Congress wanted to do about it. Individual members of Congress were demurring—Michigan's admission would upset the balance between free and slave territory. Besides, it would be Democratic, and the Congressional majority was Whig and didn't want any more Democratic votes.

Patiently, over the weeks, Lyon and Norvell canvassed each member individually. By spring, 1836, they had obtained a compromise. The jealous Congressmen would admit Michigan *if*—and the list of *ifs* seemed endless. *If* a slave State were admitted simultaneously, to preserve the status quo . . . *if* the Michigan delegation could win some sort of promise from Ohio not to bolt the Administration during the coming election campaign . . . *if* Michigan would accept the Upper Peninsula in full settlement of all rights in the "Toledo Strip".

Yes, yes, they said. Yes, they'd accept anything. Arkansas

was ready for admission, and the pair could be presented on the same Congressional bill. Yes, they'd accept the Upper Peninsula. Yes, they'd help soothe the thirty-five electoral votes.

Lyon was growing increasingly irritable. "An honest man," he wrote, "after looking on here a month or two, would laugh at himself for ever having supposed that the merits of a question like this would have anything to do with the decision of Congress upon it." Ex-President John Quincy Adams, an old-time Federalist and more recent head of the Whig Party, became fatigued with the endless horse-trading of his House colleagues. He made a fervent appeal in the House for Michigan's admission as a matter of plain right. In the Senate, Thomas H. Benton echoed the demand. But the backstage wirepullers wouldn't let it come to a vote.

The last objection they could raise was that Michigan had undertaken the illegal course of setting up a State government when, after all, she was still a Territory and had a duplicating Territorial government. In Detroit, Mason realized with a start that Little Jack Horner was still around somewhere. He had forgotten about Horner completely. So had everyone else except the Whigs, to whom Horner was a never-ending source of friction upon whom they could make political capital. Mason had not even seen Horner since the hectic days immediately following his inauguration, when he had told Horner to move his office out of the capitol and set up shop somewhere else. Fortunately, the capitol building belonged to the people of Michigan and was not a Federal building.

Horner, perforce, moved. He had spent the winter at Ypsilanti, living very quietly in an inn near the one whose landlord had billed him for the damage caused by the mob. Mason saw an opportunity to make two gains if he had enough salesmanship. He sought out Horner.

For about a week, Mason inspired a lot of questions about where Little Jack Horner was; what he was doing for his salary as Acting Governor. His inn at Ypsilanti became the center of another scrutiny by the unfriendly citizens, who had never liked him and resented the mere fact of Horner's pres-

ence in Mason's bailiwick. When Mason appeared, Horner was glad to see him.

Mason said he had been advised that Congress was about to create the new Territory of Wisconsin, as a prelude to Michigan's admission. Now, Horner had better get there with all possible speed. The Territory would include all the vast residue of land left over when the two peninsulas of Michigan were withdrawn, and Horner would automatically be Governor of it if he got there before a new one was appointed. He ought to be on the scene when the historic moment came for him to assume command.

Horner's round face beamed with gratitude. Mason offered to help him find a team and a wagon to move his household goods and Mrs. Horner. The little man's double chin trembled with unspoken gratitude.

On April 20, 1836, Congress created the Territory of Wisconsin. Horner was there. He made the proclamation which set the Territory in motion. He became a Founding Father and one of Wisconsin's most respected citizens. It was Horner who founded the City of Ripon, Wisconsin, where a scant two decades later a meeting was held which became one of the twin birthplaces of the present national Republican Party. The other was held in Jackson, Michigan. Each city now claims to be the original birthplace of the Party. Horner became successful in Ripon and died there, full of years and honors, in 1883.

After his departure from Michigan, Mason felt that the last objection had been overcome and the last obstacle removed. In exasperation he wrote to Lucius Lyon wanting to know what more he could do. Both Lyon and Norvell answered, saying that they saw no hope for action on the bill until the following June.

CHAPTER VIII

BREAKING INTO THE UNION

I

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, Member of Congress and ex-President of the United States, strode into the cloakroom off the old House chamber in the unfinished capitol building at Washington. The session, like many others recently, had been taken up with a good deal of rather acid debate about Michigan's chances for statehood. Privately, said Adams, he didn't think Michigan's chances were worth a continental. But he would go on pleading her cause in public at every opportunity because of a belief in the justice of Michigan's cause and a sense of outrage at the way she was being treated. He was getting heartily weary of seeing the issue twisted and tortured by members of both Houses who were trying to wring the last vote, and pledge, out of it.

He explained to the unaccredited Michigan delegation how he felt. He reminded them that Illinois had lately espoused the cause of Ohio and Indiana in the border controversy, and that together these three States had six Senators and twenty-nine Congressmen. It was a tight little bloc, Adams continued, which was holding together on every issue that came up. Now, the election was going to be a free-for-all, with no telling who would win the nomination in either party convention.

There were, he said, a half-dozen or more aspirants for the Presidency. Scarcely anyone dared advocate Michigan's admission for fear of jeopardizing his chances or antagonizing this bloc of electoral votes. The border issue and Michigan's plea for admission were intertwined and together they constituted a clear case of political dynamite.

The majority in each House had no real objection to Michigan's admission. They probably would approve the bill if it

could be dug out of the Judiciary Committee and scheduled for a hearing. But it could not be reported out until the wirepullers were satisfied that Michigan was thoroughly licked and that Mason, personally, was humble. In order to satisfy everybody, in the Adams view, a statement to that effect should be made. The Michigan men assured him that everybody had long since given up the fight for the "Toledo Strip".

No, answered Adams, that was not the case. The Whigs in Michigan hadn't given up; they were forever complaining about it editorially in the little rural weeklies. It was still a political issue. If the two Senators and one Representative would assure the ruffled politicians that Mason would indeed accept any settlement Congress saw fit to award Michigan for the loss of the strip, he thought the bill could be exhumed.

Assurances were given. The bill was reported out on March 1, 1836, with a statement that the Judiciary Committee felt that the Upper Peninsula would be a disadvantage to the new State but that geographical considerations made it necessary for it to be administered by Michigan. In case a ship canal could be constructed at the Soo, the Committee believed that the whole chain of lakes would become a Michigan waterway. By water through this proposed canal it was suggested that the administration of the Upper Peninsula would be easier for Michigan than for the new Territory of Wisconsin, which was separated from the area by a mountain range. It was recommended, therefore, that Michigan be admitted with the Upper Peninsula, and a southern border on Ohio's "Harris Line".

No opposition to this proposal was evident from the voteless Michigan delegation. The bill went into the hopper and stayed there, awaiting its turn. On April 25, 1836, the Senate voted on it favorably, twenty-four to seventeen. The House, however, delayed week after week. Nothing Lucius Lyon could do, even with his wide personal popularity, could make any impression on the granite-like indifference of the House. It was said in the corridors that Michigan was being punished for the way Mason had embarrassed Governor Lucas in the Toledo War.

It became apparent that the House was going to delay action on the bill as long as possible, at least until after the fall elections. The Whigs might then have a Whig President and a majority in Congress, and that would mean that Michigan never would become a State as long as a Democrat remained in power in Detroit. Lyon saw the implication in this apparently meaningless delay. He determined to use his ace in the hole—his friendship with the President, with the Cabinet and with members of the Democratic majority in the House. He began to exert a little pull.

With this weapon he broke the jam. The President and General Cass had friends, too. The President wanted Michigan admitted. There were rumblings in the House cloakroom, but the bill was finally voted upon under a surly atmosphere of pressure. On June 25, 1836, Lyon and Norvell sat in the House visitors' gallery watching their bill emerge for a vote. It was the long-awaited day. It was the day Lyon hoped to see his great fight won. But the political tacticians of the House handed him another long list of conditions, enraging him beyond endurance.

In the vote to admit Arkansas and Michigan simultaneously, Arkansas won admission unconditionally. Michigan, however, was silenced until long past election time by a hamstringing provision calling for local county conventions all through the Peninsula to ratify the boundaries as set forth in the bill, and to vote on whether or not to accept the Upper Peninsula. The exact wording of the bill stipulated:

"The matter will be reconsidered upon the express condition that the said State shall consist of, and have jurisdiction over, the territory prescribed by Congress and none other."

Congress knew that backwoods areas of Michigan contained many a noisy Whig and many an independent, opinionated farmer who would vote "agin the government" on general principles. Also, Congress well knew that the delay was quite likely to bankrupt Mason's unaccredited State government. Every day's delay on the vital bill was a costly loss to the impoverished Michigan treasury. Since she had ceased to be a

Territory, she could no longer collect the Federal appropriation for administration expenses. And until the day of admission, not one dollar of Federal funds could be allotted to her. Caught thus between the upper and nether millstones, Michigan was rapidly going broke while Congress invented new schemes to delay.

In dollars, the desperate Michigan administrators were losing a fortune every month in the five per cent commission on the sale of Federal lands, which all recognized States were pocketing. Elsewhere, Mason feared that his precious development program would be blown sky-high because, until admitted, Michigan could not set aside an acre of its idle land for the support of the State University or any of the State functions. And additionally, there was no one who had a voice in Congress to protest.

It was a cruel but brutally efficient means of subduing the "Young Hotspur". It was the politicians' way of nailing Mason's hide on the fence, in spite of the wide popularity which surrounded him in Detroit and throughout Michigan. Congress frowned upon the way he rose up, at the head of his people, and threw out their Territorial government, and the way in which he had thumbed his nose at them in the Toledo War. The last straw, which all Washington realized would lead to the political woodshed, was Mason's rebound after he had been summarily dismissed from office. That should have shut him up. Dismissal had always worked before; it was the one sure way in which Washington could guarantee itself relief from a noisy character who wouldn't follow the politicians' rules. Mason's astonishing support in the outlaw election struck this clique of Congressmen like a blow from a mallet. Their revenge took time, but it was well thought out.

When the flattening news reached Detroit, Mason realized that they had him between the jaws of a vise. There was nothing he could do but comply, and hope that the delays would not bankrupt the State hopelessly. Accordingly, he summoned the Legislature in special session on July 25th, and told the members the sad news. Debate was brief. Action was fast.

The legislators knew that the mud-trapped roads would make response anything but swift, so they set the date for the convention to report on September 26th. They set to work to arouse the counties, so that the fifty delegates required by the Congressional bill could arrive with instructions, after being elected at a score or more of little backwoods hamlets to represent the people in the final action at the convention. They would have the written wishes of their rural neighbors in their hands.

Woodbridge saw the dawn of opportunity glowing before his eyes. As fast as Mason's loyal legislators obtained promises of support, his unforgetting Whigs raised storms of rural protest about the unfairness of being denied the "Toledo Strip". The Whig newspapers across the Peninsula erupted editorially about the injustice of the deal, and the timidity of Governor Mason in surrendering abjectly to politics when he had the war won in the field. Far from being dead and buried, the Whig opposition raised the border issue to a new high of hot controversy.

On the maps of the time, the Upper Peninsula was shown as an area almost completely separated from Wisconsin by a range of mountains, which we know now are not really such formidable barriers. To Mason's Michigan, names like "Porcupine Mountains" and "Mineral Range" sounded awesome. These two ranges of timbered foothills cut up the Upper Peninsula into a series of mountains and parallel gorges, and to persons who had never been there they seemed as fearsome as the Rockies. It was freely admitted that the area was good for nothing except fishing and furs, that it was not a colonization site. Mason's men quoted the words of the Congressional bill defining the borders of the Upper Peninsula:

"... that region enclosed by a line drawn through Green Bay, the Menominee River, Lake of the Desert and Montreal River." To us, it defines the area as a triangular space enclosed by Green Bay and Superior, Wisconsin, the south shore of Lake Superior to the Soo. Topographically the old maps exaggerate the terrain, but their estimate of the area, twenty thousand square miles, was not far off.

The local debates began. In the county courthouses out in the fresh tamarack-built towns there were "loud cries of tyranny and oppression" from the Whigs and the independent settlers. Reports from local assemblies were full of interruptions while some noisy demonstrator was thrown out. This was the first time the individual citizen had had a chance to determine the State's policy. Some of them, not knowing Mason's problem, howled for the harbor and facilities at Toledo and waved aside the whole Upper Peninsula in disgust. Mason lost heart; the fight looked hopeless. The only reports reaching him were full of bad news. One example said: "We question the desirability of entering the Union at all if we must be admitted mutilated, humbled and degraded."

Mason didn't know who was writing these reports, but Woodbridge did. Most of them were penned by Whigs who, being the richest and most influential men of the community, naturally became the delegates and wrote the expressions of their inarticulate townsmen. Not even Mason's own people were with him unanimously in the fight; many looked upon Governor Lucas as a smooth customer who had outsmarted the "Young Hotspur" by cold-decking him in the great game of politics. At the end of August, Mason saw nothing but defeat ahead. His prophetic sense was good.

The elected representatives bore the ballots of their people to the convention at Ann Arbor on September 26, 1836. They voted down the proposal offered by Congress. The vote was fairly close, twenty-eight to twenty-one, but the sentiment was plain. The people, if left to their own devices, would vote according to individual whims which had no support in the harsh facts of the case as Mason knew them. The deal was unpopular, but like any bitter medicine, Michigan had to swallow it. Mason knew he was dealing with a pure individualistic reaction when he read in the majority report of the convention that: "... in effect, Congress has given legal recognition to the State by ratifying the constitution," and that therefore Congress had no power to lay down any terms at all concerning what was a purely internal problem of Michigan.

In Washington, Attorney General Butler ruled that this position was all bosh and nonsense. Mason agreed. So did all other experienced attorneys; that report was probably drafted by a backwoods lawyer who had never tried a case outside of justice court. Butler referred to the convention as "The Convention of Dissent", and the name stuck. Back where he started and thousands of dollars in the red, Mason had no choice but to try to go on from there.

There was nothing he could salvage from the attempt to comply with Congress' terms, except possibly some experience. Congress had won; he faced the fact and sat back to see what they would do to him next. Some day, he felt, Congress would relent. Probably some future Governor could get the State admitted. Perhaps in years to come he could try again.

Pacing the floor of his small plaster-walled office, Mason meditated. Floor-pacing was his habit when agitated; he was agitated now. Word of his plight was not long in seeping back into the frontier towns. There, people who had been in the forefront of the opposition to any such deal with Congress now began feeling sorry for Mason as a man. He had a curious personal influence on his people. They felt as if he were a relative, and they took to heart any hurt inflicted on him. When they saw that it was they who had hurt him this time, they were sorry.

Mason temporarily forgot about statehood. It was the only thing he could do. He sat in his office reading the New York papers, and a flood of mail from Cass and other friends in Washington. The campaign was in full cry. It was a rather listless one, comparatively speaking. It was a puzzle. There was no definite sign pointing to anyone's victory. Both parties had able candidates. The Whigs had dusted off and thrust forth the now-ancient figure of General William Henry Harrison, a hero of the War of 1812. The Democrats had finally picked Vice-President Martin Van Buren, Jackson's assistant and acting President during Old Hickory's frequent illnesses.

In Michigan the advance predictions were for Harrison.

Gossip in the newspapers pointed out that Van Buren was not popular enough to succeed the famed Jackson; only another military hero of equivalent stature could bring out the votes. Van Buren, an aristocrat who lived in splendid isolation surrounded by an army of servants, was not the type of man to appeal to a raw and undeveloped nation, mostly frontier, and only then preparing to vote for its eighth President.

Mason received no comfort from Cass's belief that Jackson's policies would be continued in Van Buren's administration—if Van Buren won. He did not think Van Buren was going to win. Few people did. Wearily, Mason turned his attention to a flood of small appointments and an accumulation of office detail, and tried not to think about the Treasury.

When the appointed day rolled around in November, Stevens Thomson Mason was among the most surprised men in the United States. Another astonished man was the fluffy-haired Van Buren himself. The Democrats took the country by storm. They larruped the old Whig war horse, Harrison, in one of the most upsetting elections of the nineteenth century. Van Buren had a majority of more than a hundred electoral votes. Harrison dropped out of the headlines immediately. Old Andrew Jackson was shot at, for the last time, in front of the White House by an angry Whig house painter whose pistol misfired, and with this fizzle one of the greatest men of his century slid gently into the seclusion he had craved for twenty years. After Van Buren's inauguration, Andy Jackson returned to The Hermitage to die. But he still had time enough in office before that date to do something about the Michigan dilemma.

Mason's awakening to the meaning of the Democratic landslide was not long in making itself evident. He saw a chance to revive the statehood bill if he acted quickly, while the Democrats were still joyous and the Whigs were stunned. But there remained the damning fact of the defeat of the deal Congress had offered. Summoning his party cohorts, Mason told them that if that "Convention of Dissent" report could be circumvented somehow, Michigan still stood a chance for statehood.

He could not call another convention, because the Congressional bill made provision for only one. He paced the floor. There must be some way.

Even while Mason's high black custom-made boots were wearing out the threadbare rug in his office, a few loyal Mason partisans were coming to his rescue. There appeared to be a spontaneous demand for a new vote on the Congressional deal. Mason's friends were talking for him, telling the settlers what the ill-starred convention had done to him.

Within a few weeks of the election of 1836, a new form of public meeting was in full cry throughout Michigan. It was a pure example of classic, textbook democracy: the voluntary meeting of the electorate to decide what the State would do. It is doubtful whether the residents of one isolated village knew that the same kind of meeting was in progress at dozens of other villages at the same time. It was a democratic procedure, but it lacked both legal authority and administrative consent. As such, this series of meetings was entirely in character. That was Mason's Michigan; put up the project first, and then put up the proposition.

2

It sounds like sarcasm to remark that these meetings were the last example of popular government, that is, democracy like unto that of ancient Athens, at work in Michigan. Such seems to be the case. Conditions forbid the wide exercise of individual initiative by American voters today, although they have the power of consent or rejection of a stated proposal, and a choice between candidates. Jefferson was thinking of just such a society as Mason's Michigan when he tried to bestow liberty upon a young Republic in the manner of a rich gentleman endowing a library. What Jefferson meant was universal suffrage, universal participation in the fruits and expense of government, and an utter absence of a class structure. He dreamed of universal opportunity resulting from this utopia, and during the first half century of her history, the United States

struggled seriously to reach Jefferson's goal. By that time the liberal laws and universal suffrage which were to bestow liberty had bestowed instead the great families like the Vanderbilts, Astors, Livingstons and Adamases; the political circuses like Tammany, the "Spoils System" and the Whigs. The individual citizen was as much at their mercy as he had been at the mercy of the Tories prior to the American Revolution, and in the face of that comparison it seems he was no better off.

In Mason's Michigan he was, in fact, vastly better off. This was a state-wide attempt to place a large share of political power directly in the hands of the electorate, a bigger version of the New England Town Meeting. It was a place where a citizen could leave his plow like Cincinnatus to lead a regiment or a division in battle, and return to it afterward. It was a series of almost-independent towns where anybody who voted could get up on a stump and there, by stating his views to his fellow citizens, influence the conduct of his government. If enough people agreed with him, he could dominate it. In Mason's Michigan the citizen was a king, and Mason humbly regarded himself as a servant of that king.

In 1836 these sovereign citizens began gathering in barns, in schools, in town halls and village stores, and deciding that it was time to do something about Mason. They selected five anonymous committeemen who went from town to town urging greater action, more speed. These committeemen started to raise seventy delegates to attend another convention at Ann Arbor on December 14th. They succeeded; seventy-one attended.

Ann Arbor was a frozen wasteland on that bleak December day. The little courthouse had a tiny stove which could not take the chill out of the frozen air no matter how much dry wood they piled into it. Somebody said: "Well, this sure is a frost-bitten convention." And the Frost-Bitten Convention it became—a landmark in Michigan history. On the first ballot the convention voted to reverse the action of the previous body, and accept any border, any conditions, any land that Congress wished to bestow even if it turned out to be in Tibet.

They sent a copy of their report to Governor Mason and another to the President, and several of the committee set out for Washington to explain personally why they—not their predecessors—ought to be regarded as the official voice of the State.

"There is some doubt," commented Dr. G. N. Fuller in his thesis on this period, "that this convention actually expressed the will of the people. The legality of it was never questioned in Michigan, even though the delegates had no legal authority whatever."

In his own day, however, Mason strongly upheld the legality of this rump convention. "If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the September Convention," he wrote to Ezekiel Pray, of Washtenaw County, "the remedy is with yourselves. You have the inherent and indefeasible right in all cases or propositions coming before you in your original capacity, to reverse the acts of your agents if found to be prejudicial to your interests." He cited a precedent from the history of Pennsylvania. A somewhat similar popular action had been taken by the people, without recourse to constituted authority, when the young colony decided to separate from England.

Whatever he might have thought about it, Mason was off base legally. Even his greatest friend, Lawton Hemans, himself a successful attorney, could not stomach this. "However pleasantly this sort of thing might have appeared to the lay mind," wrote Hemans, "the student of government and of legal form is hardly persuaded that in a government of laws and constitutions, their decrees and established forms can thus be lightly set aside." All other legal talent is unanimous in deciding that the Frost-Bitten Convention was illegal, without authority and clearly the result of somebody's activity who had an axe to grind.

Whereas the correct, sealed, tape-bound and enscrolled proceedings of Congress said that Michigan couldn't get away with it, Mason merely forwarded a copy of the report to Washington. It was whipped through Congress in three weeks without even a debate. Andrew Jackson signed the bill admitting

Michigan as one of his last official acts, on January 26, 1837. At long last, Michigan took her official place in the star section of the flag.

Malcolm Bingay is a sharp-witted old editor who has a wide following in the modern Detroit *Free Press*. He says that right then, in 1837, his granddaddy, John Crichton Bingay, founded the Bingay Institute for the Study of Political Flapdoodle, which has continuous records to show that never, in its long and interesting history, has the Institute recorded an exception to its major precept. "There is one law," he writes, "in this low art of sniffle-snaffle which no politician has ever violated. It can be taken for granted that when a man holding office announces that he is 'studying the situation,' he is not going to do anything about it."

For fifteen months, between November 2, 1835, and January 26, 1837, Michigan had been living in sin. During that time, with Congress "studying the situation", nothing was done until the last three weeks. Then it was done arrogantly, illegally and contrary to everything Congress had demanded, but the legal vote was cast out and the illegal vote accepted. Perhaps the Institute for the Study of Political Flapdoodle has some statistics on that one.

If not, perhaps Mr. Bingay will allow me to supply some. The men who headed this apparently anonymous and spontaneous uprising of the aroused citizenry were the businessmen of Michigan. During the period when Michigan was a maverick among the States, she had lost in commissions on the sale of public lands somewhere between \$450,000 and \$600,000. This was the money needed to build the railroad, dig the canals, drain the swamps and cut through new roads. The men of Michigan needed this money as much as they admired Mason. Even more, they needed the other cash bonuses which a spectacular bit of good fortune had laid in the States' ample laps.

During November, 1836, just after the election, President Jackson announced that he was leaving office with every dollar of Federal debt paid. He had a surplus in the Treasury.

This sum was to be divided equally among the States upon the expiration of his term of office. The businessmen of Michigan knew that; they knew that unless Michigan was a legally recognized State by that time, not a dollar of it would they see. They devised this example of pure democracy; they inspired it and led it. It is, therefore, just another political pressure play like any other except that this one is hallowed in history as a demonstration of what the plain people can do if they unite. Actually it was a desperate race against the calendar, which they won in the proverbial nick of time. Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury, wrote Mason that he would extend the time a little and give Michigan her share provided she was admitted before Jackson left office. Michigan eventually received a share of this sum, and it, also, arrived just in time to soothe an incipient money panic.

It was a time of spurts: first of remarkable prosperity and then of utter stagnation in business. Detroit newspapers during the summer of 1836 had quoted rising prices on staple foods, always a good index of the times. They came back to normal in the fall when bumper crops began flooding the city, and fell steadily throughout the winter. Employment was low; money difficult to obtain on loan. The few workmen employed on private contracts loafed on the job and demanded more money. The razing of the old Cass house and the bluff adjoining became the scene of a workmens' strike, not for more money but because they did not like the foreman. They got drunk and hurled rocks at passers-by. The city hastily organized a platoon of young men to keep order, and it was this organization which later was fitted to new gold-trimmed uniforms and became the Brady Guards, Detroit's famous city militia. As commander, Ike Rowland bore the title of Major proudly as long as he lived. Throughout its history it was always being called out to protect the city against the incessant mobs and riots which were, and are, such a typical feature of Detroit. To quote Bingay again: "If this town of ours was ever without a crisis, old settlers wouldn't recognize the place."

During 1836, Detroit was changing from a one-street busi-

ness section along Jefferson Avenue, to a rather good-sized downtown section dominated by Woodward Avenue. Woodward was lined with busy shops as far as the Campus Martius, and homes were being constructed as far uptown as Grand Circus Park. It was believed that Adams Street was as far north as the town would go, and consequently it was built so that it ran straight across the northern border and could be protected by a high wall if necessary. The water front now stretched nearly two miles, from the western edge of the Cass farm to a point opposite St. Antoine Street, with straggling cottages and boat works as far as the western tip of Belle Isle. The census of 1837 gave the city more than 8,000 permanent population, which meant a summertime average of about 15,000 people there on any typical day. Six steamboats a day arrived during the season; 200,000 people came and went through the port that year. Above and below the city along the river roads, the "orderly rows of new settlers' houses seems endless," said Harriet Martineau.

The creaking wagons that bumped and jolted along the roads soon left civilization behind them when they crossed the city line. In 1837 there were a number of middle-sized towns flourishing throughout the State, but compared to Detroit they were primitive indeed. Towns forgotten now, with descriptive names like Sylvan Center, Sandstone, Palmyra, Gibraltar. Towns like Jefferson, in Jackson County, are entirely gone, and even the main streets have gone back to weeds and cultivated fields. In 1837 they were thriving communities, with wagon roads leading to them from all directions and public squares with inns, stores and bandstands. There, at grist-mill sites which vanished generations ago, boys of 1837 helped their fathers unload sacks of grain and waited for their flour by fishing below the millrace.

Settlers who came to Michigan after 1835 found a fair degree of stability. The forests were still there, but the log cabin was disappearing. New roads, laid out precisely north-south and east-west, led at one-mile intervals past painted barns and pillared farmhouses. The source of all wealth was the

land, but the land was rich. A quarter section and a family of four strapping boys meant prosperity.

The preceding generation had cleared the land, split the rails to build the fences, and hewed logs for their cabins. They had lived precariously in complete isolation at remote clearings, snowed in all winter and shaking with fever and ague in the hot summers. With their calloused hands they had grubbed roots and vines, and with their backs they had guided the huge breaking plow behind its four yoke of oxen. In the "grub-lots" where the roots were thickest, seven yoke could hardly break the sod.

The new settlers in 1835 and 1836 had money, and hired most of the heavy work done. Often they bought completely built farms, with buildings ready. As soon as these people began sowing their first crop they began keeping books. Nothing illustrates the changing type of Michigan pioneer better than the thoroughness of these old records, and the hand-set old newspapers wherein their doings were recorded.

Harriet Martineau says that after a gruelling fight with the mud on the road to Ann Arbor, she picked up a copy of an Ann Arbor newspaper at an inn where she sought much-needed rest. "It was irregularly printed and not good," she commented, "but it could happen nowhere outside America that a backwoods village like Ann Arbor, where there is difficulty in procuring proper food and accommodations, should have a newspaper." It was no exception; all the county-seat villages had newspapers. The educational standard of Michigan immigrants was astonishingly high. There are legends about pioneers who carried sweat-stained copies of Plato and Horace in their jeans to read during moments of rest from the plow. And the Ann Arbor *Argus* which so impressed Miss Martineau carried a poetry column with flowery allusions to Circe, Juno and Ceres.

In its news columns the *Argus* in 1837 reported that whereas land cost a dollar and a quarter per acre, it cost an additional ten dollars an acre to clear it with ox teams and build rail fences. This was said to be an average; timbered land might

cost fifteen dollars an acre to clear and fence; burr-oak plains and prairies cost about ten dollars. In a few cases settlers had claimed to have cleared, fenced, plowed, harrowed and seeded open land for as little as eight dollars an acre.

Pioneers recalled in documents now in the files of the Pioneer and Historical Collection that they got back as much as this outlay cost them in one or two good seasons' crops. The natural products of the land represented profit. The timber built mills on the creeks, new houses in the villages. The fields, even before plowing, yielded berries, nuts, maple sugar, honey, grasses for their livestock and small game for themselves. A Detroit man in 1836, exhausted by a hard day's ride, knocked at the door of a house near Parma. His horse had fallen down while trying to ford Sandstone Creek and he could go no farther. The farmer invited him in, and told him that this was his third season there. He wouldn't sell for forty dollars an acre, he said. He claimed he was getting eighty bushels of corn to the acre. If so, it was better than his descendants can get now on the same land.

These Michigan families lived a community life quite different from the dangerous, fever-ridden exile of the log-cabin pioneer. Barn-raising, logging bees, quilting bees, husking bees and other semi-social events indicate the willingness of the whole neighborhood to pitch in and help a man with a big job. This co-operative spirit made life an enjoyable one. Each settler regarded himself as a unit in the village team. He was ready at any time to hitch up his teams, yoke his oxen and go to help his neighbor do a job he couldn't do alone.

The era was slow, inexpensive, picturesque and thoroughly enjoyable. At least it seems so to moderns by comparison, and in retrospect to the old folk who described Mason's Michigan in letters to the Pioneer and Historical Society from about 1880 to 1900. These letters are full of detailed descriptions of everything Mason's people wore, what they ate, how they put up preserves and smoked meats and collected vegetables in great bins and always had plenty on hand even if twenty or more sat down to table. One of them said that his grandmother,

who lived on a farm near Pontiac, never seemed surprised if her numerous sons brought their large families to Sunday dinner without invitation, and could feed fifty without going to the village store for anything. It was his belief that this family could be snowed in from November until April, and emerge on the first of May wearing double chins.

A man's whiskers were as much a part of his personality as his house. Mustaches drooped downward to meet under the chin; sideburns were wavy and luxuriant. Martin Van Buren's were eight inches long, pure white, and as fluffy as an Angora cat's. The "Uncle Sam" narrow chin-beard came into fashion with the boot-strapped trousers, but it required daily shaving to keep it narrow. More common and equally expressive of solid citizenry was the "down-Easter", a thick fringe of beard all around the face and under the chin, while the face itself remained clean-shaven. John J. Adam, a State employee who kept most of the records in the capitol, had a thin, turned-down mouth that made him look like the old-time melodrama actor's idea of an old squire or a typical old sour-puss. He made himself look even more like a tintype of a curmudgeon by wearing a gray wisp of beard about three inches wide, right on his chin. It stuck straight out; Mr. Adam was a prankster and wore it that way for the laughs he got. It made him look like the stubborn old father in *East Lynne* who throws his erring daughter out into the snow.

It was the full beard, however, rather than the fancy whiskers that was the measure of a man. Men in Mason's Michigan regarded them as symbols of dignity and began growing them as soon as possible. Some were two feet long; most of them were bushy and ferocious-looking. In time they attained a rich brown hue from tobacco juice, and when they inevitably turned white, a man had either to stop chewing or keep trimming his beard. Out of these fur-bearing countenances came nasal, twangy monosyllables handed down no doubt from New England forebears, but in time attaining a pure Midwestern farm dialect form. In Mason's Michigan the dialect was perhaps at its most extreme; with the railroad era it

gradually became ridiculous and disappeared. It was the basis for the speech of the stage "rube character". Mason's farmer "calc'lated" it was time to "fetch the caows"; he "reckoned" he better get the hay in; and, if baffled, he ejaculated, so help me, "I swan."

His farm produced everything he ate or wore, except perhaps salt, pepper and buttons. He bought things like these at the village store on credit and paid once a year, with his cash crop. He had to buy his land outright and pay for it in advance, hence he had no mortgage and no bank debt. He built all the buildings on it himself, with some help from his neighbors at raising-time. His land was his citadel. He had created it out of wilderness, and he was furiously independent in thought and deed. He would vote as he felt, regardless of party or issues, but he had violent likes and dislikes which made politics in Mason's Michigan a reckless gamble. He liked Mason and disliked Woodbridge. Tomorrow he might change. He "liked that government best which governed him least". He received no form of aid from it; no relief in the recurrent epidemics of cholera and fever; no expensive developments like electric power lines and drainage programs. He received no AAA checks, no help from a County Agricultural Agent, and to him, government was just the tax assessor and the colonel of the local militia looking for recruits to fill his empty ranks in the regiment. It is understandable that he had a mental horizon bounded by the fence rails on his quarter section of land. He took a dim view of politicians in general, and became the most hidebound, rock-ribbed reactionary in the world.

Outside of the periodic church revivals, politics was his only amusement. He and his wide-hatted, bearded neighbors gathered at the courthouse to hear the "speechin'", not because of a burning zeal for justice, but to watch the candidates rant and rave, and insult each other. He was well-educated for a pioneer; amazingly so for a man who had felled a forest and was wringing a living out of land broken only a year before. He had the best rural newspaper informational service in the

world at that time, and he read constantly. But he was not, and could not become, a liberal. The newspaper did not attempt to influence his political views. It quoted markets, reviewed books, published poetry and long editorials which the man frequently did not read at all.

It is hard to generalize about 80,000 people. If these examples we know so well from voluminous records originating in Mason's time were typical, we are forced to conclude that in spite of their fund of information on public questions they remained victims of some personal whim to the last. Michigan is full of middle-aged men who say of their grandfathers: "He knew what was going on; he went to all the speeches and read all the papers, but once he made up his mind he never changed it the rest of his life. He went to his grave thinking that all Democrats were crooks." Or Whigs, or Republicans, or whatever form of stubbornness the old party had become addicted to in his youth.

The isolation of individual farms, and this intolerant, stubborn defiance of self-evident facts, continued to be a symptom of life in rural Michigan until comparatively recently. The postal system, the telephone, the automobile, have banished the isolation and forced the farmer to become a citizen of the State. There are traces of this old-time attitude in the more remote sections of Michigan today. There are fourth- and fifth-generation farmers who leave their land but once a year, and then to attend the county fair.

3

Detroit forgot about business and all personal things on the day the news arrived that statehood had been granted. It was a blizzardy day in February—the 9th—and the frozen river gave up swirling whirlwinds of icy snow which froze in the citizens' beards. All the saloons and barrooms were keeping open house, and by noon the population had taken aboard so much anti-freeze that the streets were jammed with noisy

people. A spontaneous parade soon formed, with the Brady Guards' new gold-lace uniforms in the lead. The official saluting gun on the customhouse thundered twenty-six times. All day they celebrated, and most of the night as well. The residents organized a "grand illumination", by placing a candle in the front window of every house in town. Celebrating bands of neighbors serenaded each other. Mason was holding open house, and the parlor was full of red-nosed, loud-voiced visitors who clapped him soundly on the back and demanded to know if he remembered the time the "Michiganders" in the Toledo War wound up in Major Stinckney's wine cellar. Anecdotes cut the smoky, alcoholic air; did the Governor remember the boys who shot off all the State's ammunition on the way home from the War because the day fell on the anniversary of the Battle of Put in Bay?

Ruefully, Mason no doubt was remembering all those things, plus the knowledge that if he had not taken part in them, Michigan would probably have been admitted a year earlier. At the time, his people were so busy celebrating the long-awaited victory that they did not realize the real cause of the delays. Mason thereupon decided to stop being a Young Hotspur. He had been plunging headlong into legal obstacles with both fists full of illegal weapons, but nobody had protested yet. Someday they might. He had been lucky that the courts were not full of protests about the "Frost-Bitten Convention" at that very hour.

He was one of the few persons in Detroit who took time to analyze the situation. To illustrate the effervescent nature of his fellow citizens, the same people who had howled to high heaven about the highhanded methods Mason used while trying to jimmy his way into the Union; the very citizens who had shouted that he was "bartering away part of the State" and selling them down the river "like unto Joseph into Egypt", and so forth, now signed more testimonials complimenting him on "the untiring zeal and unremitting fidelity with which he tried to sustain our rights". The Legislature straightway

appropriated funds from the dwindling Treasury to pay the expenses of the delegates of the "Frost-Bitten Convention" who had gone to Washington.

Mason revelled in the new glories of his position. He had new stationery. "State of Michigan", it proclaimed. On it was the Michigan seal, designed by Lewis Cass with the help of an artist in the Treasury Department. There was a Latin motto, inspired by the famed epitaph of Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's, London: *Si Quaeris Peninsulam Amoenam, Circumspice*. (If Thou Seekest a Beautiful Peninsula, Look Around.) Under the seal appeared his name: STEVENS T. MASON, Governor. He thought he had a pretty good job for a fellow of twenty-five. He hoped he could hold it; he would have to stand for re-election during the coming fall.

He had reached the point where he began to see his career going in cycles. He was alternately popular and unpopular; booed and cheered. He no longer cared much about the hysteria of the crowd. He had a glazed, impersonal politeness that he showed to everyone; dowagers at the Governor's Ball, and drunks breathing down his neck at Ten Eyck's tavern. Strangers who followed him on the street sometimes asked, timidly: "Hello, Governor. Ain't you Mason?" The answer was always, "Yes, sir. And may I inquire your name?" He was not visibly surprised that a visiting English artist should ask to make a sketch of him while being shaved in a barber-shop on Jefferson Avenue, nor that the artist should later get the wrong name on it and sell it as a sketch of Lord Byron.

A little boy from a Whig family wrote the Historical Society that when he was about six, which was about this time, he saw Governor Mason come down the steps of the capitol building wearing his gleaming high silk topper, fringed white blanket, high black boots and gold-headed cane. He looked about eight feet tall to the child, and tremendously dignified. But because he was a Whig and Mason was a Democrat the youngster knew he could not let the occasion pass without an insult, so he ran after the Governor, shouting: "Five-quarter Mason! Five-quarter Mason!" He said he had no idea what the phrase

meant; he had heard his father talk about it. Mason turned, stared down at him, and walked back.

"I was afraid of his big gold-headed cane," he oldster recalled. "I was even more afraid when the great man came toward me, stooped down, put his arm around me and talked for some five minutes in the most soothing, amiable voice imaginable. I cannot remember a word he said, but I shall never forget the kindly tone of his voice as he spoke to me."

It was another Whig taunt, a reference to an alleged bookkeeping error by which Mason was said to have drawn five quarterly salary checks during his first year as Governor. He had indeed been given five checks, but he discovered the error before the bookkeeper did and returned the extra one. The Whigs picked up even such trivialities as this to attack Mason. By the year 1837 he was case-hardened to it and did not pay much attention to anything the Whigs called him. He expected to be lavishly praised and grossly insulted every few days, usually by the same people, and well he knew that they had no idea what they were talking about.

He mentioned a typical example in a letter to his father, the formation of the Anti-Slavery Party as a new entry on the ballots. Mason had no position about slavery; he was beligerently neutral. His reticence did not save him from becoming the center of a newspaper and village-inn storm in the spring of 1837; he was accused of being in sympathy with the slaveowners because his family had lived in Virginia and Kentucky, and conversely he was held up as a militant abolitionist who would go about creating public riots. Hadn't Harriet Martineau lived at his house while penning a violent diatribe against U. S. slavery? All the young man wanted out of life was peace. His family tried to see that he attained it.

He might have known that no governor ever has much peace. Not even modern governors. A century ago, when they were virtually kings in their bailiwicks, they were at everybody's beck and call constantly. Every time Mason cleared his desk and prepared to go hunting deer in the forests near Saginaw Bay, something happened.

During the spring and summer of 1837 he tried more than ever to get some precious time away from his desk. He seldom succeeded. In the spring his father arrived to complete the family circle once more. The girls were there, and even his mother seemed to be feeling better. Emily was the iron-willed hostess of the little gubernatorial residence. She was twenty-one; jet-black hair, flashing eyes, and a long, strong chin which fairly shouted determination. She was the 1837 version of a career woman, not interested in men and never known to be a figure in a romance. She was a student of her times, forever collecting notes and filling diaries, speaking from rostrums, writing pamphlets. She became a well-known figure among the Mason manors in Virginia, rapidly evolving into a famous personality.

Sister Kate married Ike Rowland when she was eighteen, and went happily to housekeeping in a tiny bungalow on upper Woodward Avenue near Adams. The couple was so obviously under the influence of bridal bliss that Mason politely waited a month before paying a social call. Thereafter, as children began arriving, Uncle Stevens kept up his lifelong intimacy with Ike in the taverns and taprooms. They seldom visited each other's homes.

It was a standing joke with Ike to ask young Mason why he didn't marry. It always reddened Mason's face. He didn't know. He just wasn't in the mood; he didn't have time to go courting, and didn't want a girl he could win without a struggle. He complained to Ike that he was cut off night after night from any time to relax at home; something was popping up at every opportunity to sit down and rest. This crime wave, for instance.

Thugs were beating up citizens in Detroit doorways. Robbers, unmasked and defiant, stopped stagecoaches and rifled wallets. Caught without a police force in Detroit and no State-wide law enforcement system in the counties, crimes of violence multiplied until most of Mason's time was being taken up appointing marshals and answering village complaints. It was midwinter when the crime wave began, and it lasted far into

the summer. The sheriffs' departments were feeble and jealous of each other. There was no prison to put felons even if they were caught and convicted in one of the travelling Circuit Courts which visited each county seat at intervals of several weeks.

While the Legislature was in session, Mason wrote a message about it.

"One of the greatest evils under which the public is now suffering is the want of an improved and regular penitentiary system. To such an extent has this evil grown that the ends of justice are entirely defeated by the want of the necessary and proper buildings for the confinement of criminals. . . . My object is reformation of the offender, but at present this end is worse than defeated."

In the towns, promoters sniffed a State contract for a construction job. Bids came in from everywhere. At Jackson, the local committee donated to the State sixty acres of privately owned land which they bought as a speculation. They offered this for a temporary stockade while a prison was being built. Mason accepted the offer. Located on the east bank of the Grand River, the site was swampy and heavily timbered, and had to be filled, graded and prepared before it could be used. But the Circuit Courts sent enough convicted felons to get the work started. In the beginning, there was just a tamarack stockade made from poles cut on the site. It was easy to crash through. All the prisoners were manacled, and dressed in canvas suits with two-inch alternate black and white stripes. Before the stockade was secure, protests began arriving in Mason's office from other localities which declared they had been defrauded by Mason's sudden decision in favor of Jackson. One wrote: "We made our proposals and offered our inducements to the State, while the Jackson citizens offered all their inducements to the commissioners who had the power of awarding the contract."

Mason was too busy to debate the point. It might have been bribery, but at least Jackson people got a prison built. The first inventory shows that in 1837 iron shackles to attach

the prisoner's leg to a stake in the open stockade cost two dollars each; the blacksmith who hammered them on received two dollars a day for doing it. The prisoners were poorly fed, cruelly beaten for attempted escape, and did not even receive any underwear under their striped canvas uniforms. During the first winter there they nearly froze, and conditions in the "tamaracks", as the place was known to the underworld, were unspeakably cruel.

Mason changed superintendents and appointed Benjamin Porter as the first warden of Jackson Prison. Porter went to Auburn, New York, and made a survey of the grim old granite-walled prison there. He returned to build one even more gruesome at Jackson. Stories about the horrors of Jackson Prison multiplied until in defense of its good name Michigan abandoned it about 1930 and built a modern college-campus type of "rehabilitation center" a few miles outside of Jackson. It is the largest prison in the world; so vast that a person could sleep in a different bunk every night and stay inside the walls for fifteen years.

Mason would not have bragged about it.

CHAPTER IX

RAISE HIGH THE PENNANT

I

DURING THE YEAR 1837, directly following Michigan's admission as a State, the career of Stevens Thomson Mason reached its zenith. He had accomplished his mission in spite of obstacles which would have defeated a lesser man. His place in Michigan history was secure, and his stature as a governor was already so great that, had he died suddenly that spring, he would have been honored as Michigan's greatest pioneer figure. The fact that he is not so honored today, and is just a disembodied name in the school histories, rests upon what happened to Mason while he was at the top of his career and during a couple of years afterward.

He is a unique figure in the history of the United States. Nothing precisely like him has appeared on the national stage since his decline and death. The conditions which produced him have vanished. Governors no longer have the towering personal power that Mason had; business and agricultural conditions do not permit any one man's influence to dominate them on a State-wide plane. Economists call this period the era of untrammelled personal initiative. It was the time when most of the huge personal fortunes in America were created. It was a day when opportunities were everywhere, laws were few and feebly enforced, and a man could become rich by building a business on piratical methods which would land him in prison today.

Political figures in Mason's day had more personal power, too. A governor like himself was practically a dictator, with very little between his present position and absolute power except his conscience. Mason was a true liberal whose whole heart was in the desire to sublimate his own wishes, his own

desires, and truly represent the people who had chosen him. Woodbridge, on the other hand, was at the opposite end of the political spectrum, a man who saw official position as a means of getting something for himself or his followers, and not as a post of public trust.

Mason held power because he was more popular than Woodbridge; because he could think faster and because his policies reflected accurately the very things the people wanted. But the strain upon him was growing. It was soon to become intolerable. He had won his major victory in the creation of the State. Now he was faced with an even greater task—the job of building the State, constructing railroads, digging canals, filling the empty treasury, bringing Michigan out of the raw settlement phase into the new era of prosperous cities and cultural accomplishment.

In this new act of the drama which was his life, Mason was called upon to play a difficult and unfamiliar role. He would have to be an engineer, and protect the State against the schemes of visionary promoters who wanted railroads in every village. He would have to become a banker; not a small-town mortgage holder, but a wizard of the money markets who could keep a jump ahead of the sharpers in New York and London. He must become an educator, and build a system of State-supported schools climaxed and crowned by the creation of a great university. He must become a super-sheriff and authority on penology, and stop the brutal floggings in the new prison while keeping all the county sheriffs working harmoniously instead of scheming to outwit each other.

Mason's mind was many-sided. He was ingenious, but not a true genius. He was resourceful, but not always successful. He had a tendency to dash into a dilemma like a white knight upon a charger, clouting his enemies with spectacular tricks while his people cheered him on. If he was unhorsed he bounced to his feet anyhow and claimed that he had won, creating the illusion of victory and reaping the benefits whether or not his feat had really won anything. Being clever had won for him up to now.

In 1837, Mason found himself opposed to men who were as clever as himself, and far less scrupulous. They were old hands at technical games which were almost mysteries to him. They were construction engineers, bankers, brokers—people who were out to skin him at great profit to themselves. They knew Mason was committed to a gigantic public-improvement program. They were going to get theirs, and use Mason to get it.

Mason did not see the cracks in the economic structure. They were there. Bankers and lawyers saw them, but Mason was so bewildered by the magnitude and multiplicity of his many jobs that he failed to notice them. He had a hundred things to do simultaneously. The Legislature appropriated a fund which was swelled by popular subscription to engage Alvin Smith to paint the Mason portrait. Mr. Smith, a widely known New York portraitist, came to Detroit and found Mason scratching away at his desk writing all his own letters because there was no provision for an office clerk for him.

The framers of the Constitution had set \$400 as the *annual* salary of the Secretary of State; \$300 for the Banking Commissioner; \$200 for the Attorney General. These gentlemen would not spend any amount of time on State business for such paltry sums, and Mason had to do their jobs in addition to his own. He was becoming desperate. Daily he put on his resplendent black inauguration costume to pose for Mr. Smith, looking confident. Then he took it off again and became despondent, as one officer after another failed him. He had appointed a Banking Commissioner to look after the local banks chartered under the Banking Act of 1837, which was encouragingly liberal in character and allowed any remote village to set up a bank. But the appointee lived in Cass County, nearly on the shores of Lake Michigan and a hard five-day journey from Detroit. He did not appear. Mason wrote him that he would have to move to Detroit and function as a Banking Commissioner, whereupon the man told Mason to throw the job into the Detroit River, or words to that effect.

Attorney General Daniel LeRoy lived in Pontiac. When

he, too, was notified that his job was in Detroit and Mason would like to have him show some interest in it, Mr. LeRoy responded with a long legal proclamation which amounted to the same thing. Mason could get himself a new boy. The Governor had a Secretary of State only because Kintzing Pritchette was his neighbor and friend, and was willing to help him out. He had a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who lived in Ann Arbor and held court in a little log house on the edge of town. Members of the Supreme Court were circuit riders who sat in county seats as judges of the Circuit Courts. They had to sit in judgment on appeals from their own decisions.

This heavy burden of administrative work caused Mason's friends grave concern. He was not afraid of the magnitude of the task, but they were afraid he would slide over some of it, make the wrong decision out of impulsive irritation, and land himself and the State in serious trouble. He had absolutely no one to whom he could pass a buck. It was inevitable that under this pressure a man of Mason's temperament would commit a blunder. He blundered, but in 1837 he had a batting average that was nothing short of amazing. Decision after decision affecting State policies fluttered off Mason's ink-stained desk in his own ornate handwriting. They were mostly the correct decisions. As long as he did not attempt to solve technical problems in finance or engineering or jurisprudence, he maintained an excellent record.

Two examples may be cited of the kind of thing Mason was forced to decide in the midst of this confusion. One was magnificent, the other palpably absurd. He signed both bills on March 27, 1837, and during the same day he posed for Mr. Smith, held a long discussion with a legislator named Alpheus Felch on the Democratic Party situation in Monroe, and wrote several letters. It is apparent that he did not consider either bill with the care they deserved.

The first set up a fund for the support of primary schools throughout the State and for the creation, organization and construction of the University of Michigan. The fund had been

authorized by the Constitution under Mason's inspiration at the time it was being drafted. In the field of education he knew what he wanted, and his school program has developed into his most lasting achievement. The other bill was an Act which authorized the setting up of a rigid inspection system for the new State banks which were being chartered, but failed to appropriate the necessary funds for such an inspection program. The plan was a step toward a goal which Mason wanted, but did not quite know how to attain. He was for the most liberal banking policy that was practical, but he had an uneasy feeling that the bill he had signed, because of its lack of teeth, was too liberal for the State's good. He did not follow through and demand enforcement of the Act. He didn't have time to tour the State examining bankbooks himself and there was no one to whom he could delegate the task. The results were not long in becoming apparent. No one paid any attention to the inspection provisions of the Act, and the "wildcat" bank burst upon the scene with an ominous yowl.

The good and the bad—the wonderful school system and the ridiculous liberality toward backwoods banks—only Mason among U. S. administrators would have been so inconsistent. Michigan soon assumed the lead among all the States in the coverage and efficiency of her school and University program. Simultaneously her people went broke in a spectacular panic, which broke out in the summer of 1837, immediately after Mason had signed this Banking Act which, lacking any enforcement machinery, merely left rustic swindlers on their honor to be good little boys. Since people remember panics and forget an achievement like a school system, the panic straightway monopolized everyone's attention.

The beginnings of the national Panic of 1837 (capitalized by historians) were traced to Andy Jackson's temper. The old war horse had finished a successful second term in the White House and was about to bow out of public life. He did not need to curry political favor with anyone; he could act solely for the public good. He knew the United States was taking a beating from a small clique of moneyed men who were

the directors of the United States Bank. He saw these favored few rapidly obtaining control of most big-scale U. S. businesses, squeezing out the small businessmen and developing the first U. S. industrial monopolies. The Bank's charter came up for renewal just as he was leaving office, and he refused to renew it.

This act dissolved the United States Bank as a Federal institution, depository of Federal funds and the source of all Federal banknotes in circulation. The directors at once re-organized it as a private bank located in Philadelphia. Immediately, its banknotes began to be discounted. The government's surplus after all debts amounted to \$40,000,000; this was of course withdrawn from the defunct United States Bank and distributed among the States. Michigan received \$1,895,000, which was placed on deposit in two Detroit banks, the Bank of Michigan, and the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank of Detroit.

The same distribution was in progress all over the country. Everywhere, gold and silver coin virtually disappeared and a flood of bank notes issued by these State depositories was the only currency. Within six months the hoarders had hidden away so much silver coin that merchants had trouble making change. In the newer areas of the nation, such as Michigan, the paper snowstorm of bank notes was a bonanza in one way, because they could buy public lands with Bank of the United States bank notes at par, but the Government had to discount them and take a loss.

To stop this, and to discourage the increasing speculation in public lands on the part of a great number of bootstrap promoters of dubious real-estate gambles, Jackson in 1836 had signed the famous "Specie Circular", which demanded gold or silver of a certain weight and fineness as the only allowable payment for public lands. Immediately, speculation stopped and the bank notes went into a tail spin of depreciation.

In Michigan alone these sales of public lands in 1836 had amounted to \$5,241,228.70, which was one fifth of the entire national total. When the Specie Circular demanded only specie payment, the speculators turned to speculating in bank

notes themselves; selling them to each other and to gullible citizens for some promised redemption at a very vague date. The notes continued to depreciate. Men who had to deal in money soon accumulated bales of the things. One of them was Barnabas Campeau of the old Detroit family, a private banker. He bought Belle Isle from John Macomb for \$4,500 in notes of some suspended banks of Ohio which had been foisted on him, and thus the island cost him nothing. Detroit had been trying to obtain it as a municipal park, but because of the Campeau purchase, was prevented from doing so until 1879, when the island and its bridge approach cost the city \$700,000 in legitimate money.

In May, 1837, the first blow of the Panic fell. New York banks suspended payments in specie; Philadelphia and Boston banks followed soon afterward. When word of the crisis reached Michigan, Mason called the Legislature into special session to ask that Michigan authorize all banks to stop redeeming bills in specie and thus dissipate their backing for the bales of bills they already had in circulation. Almost every bank in the State closed. A few reopened after a week or so, when an examination of their assets had insured their solvency. But mostly the bank closings were followed by failure, suspension or sympathetic closing of a good many mercantile and industrial firms.

Panic, following a wave of seemingly limitless prosperity, swung the popular pendulum away from Mason at a most inopportune time. It was election year, and during the summer both political parties would hold their conventions. Mason was thus forced to stand for re-election with his State in the grip of the worst panic his people had ever seen.

The Whigs were everywhere, distributing vitriolic handbills, stumping the counties with evidence that Michigan was bankrupt, and even organizing bread lines in Detroit as a campaign stunt. They placed display advertising in the *Advertiser*:

"To the poor: The Whigs will distribute one hundred dollars in bread and pork among the city poor tomorrow evening.

Due notice of the hour and place will be given in the morning paper."

They thought Mason would squirm at that, but he shrugged it off. Most of the "poor" turned out to be Irish families from Windsor, across the river, and the stunt backfired on Woodbridge when some of his own partisans said they thought it was just an attempt to stir up more trouble. There was trouble enough in the State. As more and more banks remained sullenly closed, the public temper approached the boiling point. How many people blamed Mason for this state of affairs we don't know, but the proportion was not considerable.

As always in panic conditions, the laboring man and the farmer were the chief sufferers. Food prices fell away to such a point that the farmers could not afford to bring their produce to town. Employment almost disappeared, as one business after another followed the insolvent banks into failure. Only in Detroit did the inevitable mob scene make its appearance when the old Campus Martius was packed on May 3rd, following a rumor that Mason was going to issue a proclamation invalidating all the bank notes in the State. The rumor was false. Mason at the moment was making a personal plea to the Legislature to give him some full-time, skilled Banking Examiners, and quickly. He asked for three; he was given two, and later a third was added. The delegation from the mass meeting found him with some news to tell. . . . He reported that he was going to examine every bank in Michigan and find out exactly what was the trouble. In the meantime, there would be at least two banks open in Detroit, well backed with great casks of yellow gold coin and gilt-edge, first-mortgage bonds. Other old-time conservative banks remained open in Monroe, Adrian, Tecumseh and Marshall. It was, he said, the best he could do.

Luck was with him. The forests were full of immigrants who had arrived but lately, their pockets full of cash gained from the sale of the farms they had left in the East. They introduced enough metallic money into the currency system to keep things going fairly well. These people had to stay, because they had

bought land and spent their money on improvements for it. They were committed to whatever Michigan's course was to be. Like the independent, optimistic people they were, they bounced back rapidly. They prepared their fields in the spring and gathered a prodigious crop in the fall. As Mason told the Legislature: "The wealth of our State derives from its farmers, and from their land. Agriculture is our foundation stone." The farms were lavish in 1837; few people had money, but no one starved.

The harsh experience of this prolonged panic made a deep impression upon Mason. Everyone in his administration knew that something was terribly wrong with the banking situation. Whether the trouble was with the Act authorizing the banks, or with its administration, no one then knew. It would take time to find out. In the meantime, Mason decided that the time had come to turn his attention to something more pleasant.

2

Viewed from the perspective of time, Mason's achievement in setting up America's oldest and greatest State-supervised public-education program outweighs his error in not going after the "wildcat banks" until struck down by the Panic of 1837. The State has gained more from its schools than it lost in the brief experience with the "wildcat banks". Michigan schools are something quite unique, and have pointed the way toward educational reforms all over the world. Probably the educational standards of Michigan schools are no better than elsewhere, but the standard of teachers' salaries certainly was. In Mason's time his boldness in paying teachers a living wage was considered fantastic.

Because he knew more about schools than he did about banks, he went into his task with a knowledge of what he, as an individual, would have wanted to achieve had he been a child again, about to enter first grade. Because he would not compromise on his school dream, he insisted that the Superintendent of Public Instruction have the best job in the State

next to his own, and a salary of \$1,500 a year—phenomenal for an educator in those days. He selected and coached his own candidate for the post.

The candidate was John D. Pierce, an ordained Congregational minister who lived at Marshall, a town in the central part of the State. The Rev. Mr. Pierce was a big, raw-boned, calm-voiced man with a black beard that cascaded over his waistcoat, and a pate almost as bald as an egg. He had the wild eye and the tireless energy of the true crusader; he could rise to his great height and bellow forth his demands for the most astounding set of schools in the world, and convert tight-fisted local committees. He was truly an apostle, preaching a new gospel.

Mason had first met him during the cholera epidemic of 1832, when he sought shelter in Pierce's cabin after a wild night ride from Ypsilanti. Mrs. Pierce died that night while Mason was there. The Rev. Mr. Pierce took no time then to mourn. He saddled a horse and rode with Mason to help fight the epidemic, and afterward he returned to the empty log cabin, became a recluse and wrote elegies to her memory in Latin. He did his own cooking, and kept a cat.

The appearance of a dynamic character like this in the educational world, and Mason's success with him, indicates the Boy Governor's success in recognizing and encouraging talent. He knew that the Rev. Mr. Pierce held a degree from Brown University and that for some years he had a bold theory about education. Mason backed him, fought for him at the Constitutional Convention, and succeeded in writing this theory into the document in the form of constitutional authority for Pierce's schools and sharp legal teeth to protect them from exploitation. Isaac Crary, the first Michigan Congressman, lived in Marshall and it was he who really brought the two into harmonious action as a smooth-working team. Mason summoned the minister and drew from him the facts about his background and his starting point on this educational crusade. It was a fascinating story.

The minister had had plenty of time to read, following the

death of his beloved wife. Into his hands came a translation by Sarah Austin of a report in German on the school system of Prussia, published in New York in 1835. It emphasized the typical Prussian national characteristics—centralized control coupled with strict discipline by a responsible public official. In Prussia the superintendent of the state schools wore a gold-braided uniform and strutted with a sword and a military title. His pupils all wore little round soldier caps, recited in unison and sat stiffly at attention in class. But Prussia pounded the rudiments of education into their hard, flaxen little heads, and there were figures to show one of the lowest illiteracy rates in the world. There everyone, regardless of birth or means, had to go to school. The State paid for it, and the State paid the truant officer, too. The superintendent was appointed by the King, and paid a handsome salary from the royal purse. If he did not show results, he could be ousted and disgraced.

The benign missionary, shivering in his little log cabin, read this account and was thrilled. He realized that in this forested peninsula there was no existing school system to tear down against entrenched opposition; there was a fast-growing population with children who grew even faster. By establishing a new school system on a new basis, he could begin by aiming at a big future population, and thus build on a well-planned foundation. The bare idea of universal free education was only beginning to be accepted. What the Rev. Mr. Pierce proposed was an end to illiteracy, with a tough State Department cracking down.

To Mason this was also the answer to his own dream. He knew from his own experience what some pitfalls were—private boarding schools were high on the list. They did not reach a sufficient slice of the population. Young as he was, he could remember vividly the troubles he had had trying to educate himself between gaps in his attendance at private schools. He shuddered at the inadequacies in his school background. He had never had a chance to attend anything comparable to the public school of today, for the reason that until Pierce read

this article on Prussia, nothing of the kind had existed in the United States. Characteristically, Mason's dream went far beyond Pierce's, and envisioned branch colleges at all the bigger towns and the greatest State University in America. Seeing this detailed picture of his goal before him, Mason enthusiastically backed Pierce.

The Rev. Mr. Pierce started his sales talk in Mason's office by saying that he was going to take the cruelties and over-emphasis on regimentation and discipline out of the plan but keep the iron-fisted State control. No one, said Pierce, was going to grab any school land at any time for any purpose. Downtown business frontage in many a Michigan city is occupied by a school. That land belongs to the State and cannot possibly be used for any other purpose than a school. In all the counties, towns and villages the same principle applies. The State controls thousands of acres of school lands.

This came about because Mason and Pierce put a section into the Constitution reserving one section of land in every sixteen for the support of primary schools. In Michigan this amounts to 640 acres of land in every township of every county. A great deal of this land is under cultivation in modern Michigan, but the income from it reverts to the State's primary school fund, which is then apportioned among the counties. The fund maintains a county school board, with a county school commissioner and staff of supervisors. It also maintains a school library in every county, which today travels from one school to another in trucks.

Using this county organization as a supervisory and administrative machine, Pierce placed the actual conduct of the remote rural schools under the direction of township school boards. These boards are empowered to assess a special school tax on all township property, which goes to pay the teacher's salary and buy fuel for the little stove. As the valuation of farm land in Michigan has risen, the primary school fund and the township school tax revenues have risen accordingly. Municipalities also have separate school boards and a separate school tax to finance city schools. Families which send their

children to private schools or parochial schools pay the public school tax just the same.

Michigan today has beautiful public schools. She can afford them. She pays teachers one of the highest average salary schedules in the United States, and behind that achievement rise the ghosts of Mason and Pierce. Pierce planned it. For a century, successive generations of politicians have schemed to get their scoops into the pile of gold that annually filters down to the towns and counties as the primary school fund. So far, they have been unsuccessful. Had that provision not been written into the Constitution, it certainly would have been ripped into tatters by the appropriation hounds by this time.

Pierce figured everything in his plan to the last decimal place. He designed a standard rural school, with two doors for boys and girls leading to two convenient "Chic Sales" exactly a hundred feet from the doors. He spied on the first attendance officers, to see if Farmer Jones had sent Willie to school or was keeping him in the barnyard to do the chores. If he caught Willie at home on a school day, Farmer Jones was fined. To supply teachers for the scores of schools thus created, Pierce set up and headed the first normal college in the Middle West. He laid out the curriculum and taught several courses himself. As he foresaw the effect of an education on the farmers of the succeeding generations, he inspired the first successful agricultural college in the northwest. This institution is known now as Michigan State College at East Lansing, one of the oldest and largest, and probably the most famous of its kind in the country.

They called him "Father Pierce". Before he had his school system running smoothly his beard had turned gray and his wild fanatic's eye was dim and philosophical, but he clung to his original doctrines. When he began his work for the State, he sold his cabin at Marshall, put his household goods on a lumber wagon and started for Detroit. He did not know where he was going to live when he arrived there, and apparently did not care. Mason told him to store his furniture and take a long

trip through the East, visiting many kinds of public and private schools, taking notes and absorbing ideas. He conferred with college presidents and school deans throughout New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and before he returned he appeared as guest lecturer at the two chief teachers' conventions—those at Worcester, Mass., and Cincinnati. On his return he worked his notes into a powerful lecture which he delivered to the Legislature and won a resounding vote of approval.

Mason discovered in this bearded evangelist a nature as impetuous as his own, but a strength of will he could not equal. He tried to get Pierce to take over the University project as well as the primary schools and colleges. Nothing doing, said Pierce. Mason wrote him a persuasive letter:

"The State fund for the support of the common schools will, with prudent husbandry, equal our utmost wants. The University of Michigan will also possess an endowment which will enable the State to place that institution upon an elevation of character and standing equal to that of any similar institution in the Union. I would therefore recommend the immediate location of the University, and at the same time the adoption of a system for its government, such as the system for the government of your primary schools. In the organization of your common schools, which are the foundation upon which the whole system is based, the first measure essential to the success and good government is the appointment of teachers of the highest calibre, both moral and intellectual. Liberal salaries should be allowed. . . . Without this you fail in your object, as individuals in all respects competent to the charge of your schools will be excluded from them by the parsimoniousness of their compensation."

Mason always phrased letters like this from force of habit. He was capable of writing to Emily: "I like New York and would like to live there." He could not say anything of an official nature simply. In this letter he could not say, for example: "If you offer poor pay you'll get poor teachers." He referred ponderously to the parsimoniousness of their compen-

sation, which would drive one of his own high-school English teachers to sharp remarks. The Rev. Mr. Pierce, who could read this stuff as rapidly as he could read normal English, was not impressed. He said he would advise Mason on the curriculum and the relationship of the University to the State, but he would not serve as a Regent nor had he time to hold office in its administration.

Well, replied Mason, what about the gap between the primary schools and the rigid requirements of a University? What he had in mind, he went on, was a chain of academies to be located in the principal towns, which would receive graduates of the primary schools and provide them with secondary-school educations leading to college entrance. Some of these academies, because of their locations, ought to offer some college courses in addition, because he felt that a good many students would not go on to the University. These academies would not confer degrees, but they would all be branches of the University and subject to its control. What did Pierce think of that?

Pierce's reply, if any, is not on record. It was a good means of plugging the gap between a little country school and the sophisticated University, and for his times was an efficient solution. Mason went ahead with plans to build these branch colleges at Detroit, Pontiac, Centerville, Niles, Grand Rapids, Palmer, the old Indian town of White Pigeon, Jackson, Monroe, and Mackinac. While the long and apparently endless job of establishing the University was in progress, these branches were the highest education a public-school student could obtain in Michigan.

Mason might have written a book himself, before he left office, entitled "How To Build a University". He certainly wished many times while the exhausting task was in progress that he could hold in his hands a good book with such a title. The most that Michigan people knew about a university, including those who held degrees from many great ones, was that no matter what Michigan built, or endowed, or authorized, it was useless unless all the presidents of the leading American

and foreign universities accepted it and accredited it as a member of their intellectual stratosphere society. They would not conceivably take such a step, he was told, until the institution had been running as a maverick for a few years and had acquired the prestige, the traditions, the alumni body and the bad habits without which a university was no better off than a private young ladies' seminary.

Mason therefore sent for a pedant. This character, whose erudition was so profound that he could recite lewd verses in Greek, was accredited as the Mason ambassador to the sanctums of the world's great educators. He carried a sizeable proportion of all the hard money in the Michigan Treasury for his prolonged travelling expenses, including \$5,000 in gold to procure a few books in Europe to act as the nucleus of a library. His name was Dr. Asa Gray, a loyal native son of Michigan whose scholarship field was botany, and who was well recognized as a professor of the subject. He travelled for nearly two years; he succeeded magnificently in his mission and returned with specific suggestions from many American and European universities as to the standards to be set at Michigan's proposed institution. Along his route, he had picked up a few cases of works in French, German and Italian on the natural sciences, some sets of classic poets and dramatists in Latin and Greek, and a few works in English. This was the beginning of the University of Michigan Library, now housed in a place so vast that modern undergraduates frequently become lost in its endless corridors and have to be located by radar.

The location of the new University was a puzzle for a time which was finally settled in favor of Ann Arbor. There were two or three good reasons. First, of course, Ann Arbor had the site. There was a wooded plateau just east of the old town, heavily forested with oak and elm, which the citizens of Ann Arbor offered as a site for the campus. The owners, the Ann Arbor Land Company, decided to donate the first forty acres to the State gratis, because they also owned all the adjoining property and hired carpenters who could build

boardinghouses for the students. Secondly, Ann Arbor bore a reputation for culture dating back to its earliest settlements in 1817. Most of the settlers who took up land there were well educated. They brought with them the first libraries in the forests; they published little newspapers as early as 1822, and in 1831 there were two of them competing for the scanty business of the forested county. The leading Michigan newspaper outside Detroit was the old *Western Emigrant* of Ann Arbor, which in 1835 became the now-famous *Argus*. Ann Arbor was the home and professional location of William Asa Fletcher, the eccentric Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court; the scene of most of the important annual conventions and the expected site for any institution of this kind. It was pointed out to Mason that the very atmosphere of Ann Arbor was so conducive to culture that the first white child born in the county was named Alpha.

Mason himself, so it is said, planned the arrangement of the first row of buildings along the western edge of the campus. His architects designed a pair of classroom buildings just alike, separated by a wide expanse of bright green lawn from the western border of the tract, reached by a pair of gravel paths. They were four-story brick oblongs, with narrow windows and even narrower stairways. Between them was a rustic walk leading to the coal bins, out back, from which the students filled the tiny individual stoves in the low-ceilinged classrooms. The northernmost of these two buildings was set aside for the College of Literature, Science and the Arts. After completion it was given the name Mason Hall.

It is still there, but difficult to locate without a guide. It has been swallowed up by the modern classic temples in marble and glass which now stretch endlessly around the perimeter of the original forty-acre campus. It is there, tucked away behind Angell Hall, looking like the contractor's shanty left by mistake when the modern temples of learning were erected in our generation. Mason Hall is Mason's building and his monument. He worked for it; he stood there on a wooden plank walkway on what we now call State Street and watched

it rise, brick by brick. That little old classroom building gave Mason more real satisfaction than anything else he ever accomplished. To him it was the University; it was the triumph of his perseverance and the Legislature's patience when Michigan men said it couldn't be done. Mason dreamed of this building somewhat as we see it now—the original structure and cultural heart of what was to become one of the greatest centers of learning in the world.

No one believed that such an institution could be created, much less maintained, out there in the depths of a Michigan forest nearly a thousand miles from New York and Boston. The University authorities declare in their own history of the institution that Mason's mind saw it originally, not as just another school, but as the most influential State University in the Union. They concede credit to Mason for his determination to see it through until some day, years after him, a future governor would acknowledge that his goal had been reached and that Ann Arbor had joined towns like Oxford, Heidelberg, Cambridge, New Haven, Princeton and Palo Alto in a common connotation. It is universally admitted that the goal was reached long ago.

The little old relic looks today just as it did when Mason stood in his top hat and mud-smeared boots on the wooden sidewalk along the western boundary watching the workmen lay up the brick. It is one of the few connecting links between his day and ours; perhaps it is the most appropriate of all monuments to his memory. It is today hardly more than a symbol of what Mason tried to do then, and what he faced in the way of constructional difficulties and ignorance of modern materials. For his day it was a splendid building. A delegate to the Whig convention in Ann Arbor about the time Mason Hall was finished wrote to his brother at Syracuse: "Saw the College up here. Two new buildings just finished; looks like it is going to be even bigger than the College at Syracuse." Visitors said the campus had a "noble aspect"; that it was bigger than Harvard Yard and prettier than Princeton.

Whatever else happened to Mason's memory in the cen-

ture since his death, his University lives and thrives. He is only one of a great many men who have regarded the University of Michigan as their greatest career, although many of them never held any office in it. There have been Regents, both appointed and elected, who have neglected everything else to work for the University; Governors who have had to extract it from difficulties which threatened to swamp it. Mason's protection was buttressed by the Constitution; he laid down the principle that the Board of Regents ought to be chosen by the State and responsible to the State. He endowed the University with great blocks of land, some of it in the Upper Peninsula and some in the best areas of wealthy cities. He worried about such obscure details as the care of the lawn and the accommodations for the first students. He was one of the founders, and among all who helped build it, none felt more pride in the mere sound of the name: "University of Michigan."

Generation followed generation to the boardinghouses of old Ann Arbor. In 1860, the two original buildings were still housing the whole University classrooms except for the College of Medicine. Before the Civil War, the high school appeared in Michigan and Mason's branch academies were closed. The Michigan Agricultural College became Michigan State; the little teachers' college at Ypsilanti is the Michigan Normal College of today. The branch at Kalamazoo became Western State Teachers' College; that at Marquette moved to the Upper Peninsula and became the Michigan College of Mines.

Mason and the Rev. Mr. Pierce built better than they knew.

3

Sometimes during the summer of 1837, Mason would stand quietly in the narrow living room of his little house on Jefferson Avenue gazing at his mother, wondering how long she would live. Elizabeth Moir Mason was showing the effects of a difficult frontier life in the way most women did in the era before the advent of modern medicine. Emily's statement on the sub-

ject was written in 1904, when she herself was about twice the age of her mother at this period, and unquestionably twice as strong. Emily says that her mother had not been well for some years. She was wasting away, growing thinner and more fragile with each new season. John T. had given her as much quiet and rest with him as his own restless wanderings would allow. When he was deep in the Louisiana bayous or the Red River valley in Indian Territory, Elizabeth Mason of necessity was sent back to Detroit and another period of weariness and mental depression.

In 1837 she was present in the Detroit home all summer. During the preceding winter she had been absorbing sunshine in Mexico with John T., and Emily was the Governor's hostess and household manager. "Adieu to studies and books!" she wrote, exultantly. "Ostensibly I had Latin and French and music to study, and the fine library my father had left us to draw from. But little time had I for study; it was all politics and pleasure. All the distinguished persons who came to Detroit were entertained by the Governor, and among others I remember Harriet Martineau, with her formidable ear trumpet. We young people stood in much awe of her."

When the fragile Elizabeth returned, Emily kept on running the household and everyone in it. The strain of all her overlapping activities put her into a "decline", very fashionable at the time, and for which the only cure was an expensive vacation at a well-known hotel and a horsehair trunk full of new clothes. An invitation from the owner of a big Virginia manor to come and spend a few weeks might have had a tonic effect upon Emily's constitution, also. John T. wrote from Mexico that he was coming out in the fall and intended to spend the winter at New Orleans. Emily and her mother began planning their trip months ahead.

She took notes on the Governor's behavior. "Sometimes after the day's work he came home and studied until two in the morning," says her diary. "He was an earnest student. He denied himself the pleasures of the table, lest they should dull his brain and make him less capable of taking in the weighty

matters of the law, in which he hoped to win distinction. This was the dearest wish of my father. 'We have been a family of lawyers; you must not desert the path in which your grandfather and great-grandfather won renown', he used to say." John T. himself, while winning scant renown, had made a lot of money as a lawyer, but he preferred not to spotlight his own career in this fatherly message. Emily did not dwell on it, either.

Mason was on a diet, working late at night, and slaving like a beaver. He was not so much interested in renown as in self-protection. He was trying to study some of the intricacies of finance, so that he would seem less like an amateur when the inside story of Michigan's corrupt banks burst upon the public. He was digging down to the basic facts about banking, so that he would have some information to draw upon when the technical questions about bond issues and development loans came up in the Legislature. He was paying the penalty for being young, for starting at the top, as Governor, instead of working up to it through two decades in politics.

The house was usually filled with guests, and Emily had her hands full with guest lists and colored servants. It sometimes startled Emily to remember that her brother was only twenty-five years old. He seemed so much more mature than that; responsibility was aging him, and the fear of being caught in the middle over some technical problem was sobering him fast. He was still called the "Boy Governor", the "Young Hotspur", and "The Stripling" in the Michigan weeklies. It was just a nickname, more of a political handle than a description.

With more than his normal degree of caution he began preparing for another State election. In 1835 the Whigs had side-stepped the certain avalanche that would have buried them had they participated. In 1837 they not only were competing, they had a red-hot campaign issue and a candidate nearly as popular as Mason himself. Mason, as the defending champion, found himself without a campaign issue except his record, and that was an easy target for his enemies.

About the time the State parties were gathering for their conventions, Daniel Webster arrived in Detroit to visit his son, Daniel, Jr., a Detroit Whig attorney. Webster, along with Clay, was the incarnation of the Whig party—a mighty figure among the wealthy and professional classes. Like Jackson, Webster had a wide personal following who did not care about his politics as long as they could gaze at him on a platform, and listen to his voice. He had another purpose in visiting Michigan; he had an interest in a land company along the Chicago Turnpike, and he had come out during a Congressional recess to see how his investment was coming along.

The Whigs grabbed him at once, and lionized him. They staged a big barbecue and rally in the surviving remnant of the Cass orchard, installing the great man on a flag-draped speakers' stand on a knoll between Fort and Lafayette Streets, near First Street. There Webster took his place on the platform, cowed the crowd with one of his imperious glances, and proceeded to deliver an oration that verbally knocked the Democrats end-over-end all over the landscape. Afterward the Whigs wined and dined him at a great banquet for 500 guests, at which Webster repeated all the unpleasant things he had said about Democrats, adding a few more every time there was a lull in the applause.

This campaign was being difficult enough to Mason without having to take the stump against Daniel Webster. The Whig papers erupted in a rash of elaborate compliments. The *Ann Arbor Argus* said: "This speech should be stereotyped and become the pocket companion of all office-seekers and declaimers for all time to come." The style of Webster's delivery was hailed as "admirable"; editors said he was "full of his hearers and full of himself". This probably aptly described Webster after the big banquet, but Mason searched the columns in vain for a good word about himself or his party. There was none. In an eloquent journalistic silence, he prepared for his re-election campaign.

The Democrats held their convention as usual in the little courthouse in Ann Arbor, near the place where workmen were

fell trees on the new campus of the University. A delegate brought Judge Fletcher a jug of hard cider to discourage him from interrupting the debates with anecdotes of what he did when he first came to Ann Arbor on a mule, his lawbooks in his saddlebag, and had to fell trees to build a log cabin. Other delegates stood around and watched the grading of the campus site instead of attending sessions. Mason did this himself. No one paid much attention to the party problems.

Eventually the convention got down to the business before it, and renominated Mason for a second term unanimously. Ed Mundy and Isaac E. Crary were renominated; resolutions in praise of President Martin Van Buren were passed. Mason was busy "sidewalk superintending" the grading job and had to be told that the renominations of both Mundy and Crary had deadlocked the committee for hours, finally being submitted to the whole convention which promptly tied itself up in another deadlock. It was hard work to solve the riddle, and the delegates grew irritable. By the time Mason returned to the floor the pair had been renominated, but it was a struggle.

Mason began feeling a sinking sensation. It was the most listless body of Democrats he had ever seen. They could not arouse any enthusiasm for the party or for their candidates. The voters would feel the same way.

The Whig party convened in the same building a week later. There, amid shouts that rattled the little windows, the Whigs demanded Mason's head. With blood-curdling war whoops they nominated Mr. Charles C. Trowbridge of Detroit for the Governorship, Daniel Bacon of Monroe as Lieutenant Governor and Hezekiah Wells of Kalamazoo for Member of Congress.

Mason knew a good deal about Trowbridge. The two, in spite of their political differences, were good friends and had been seen together frequently. Charlie Trowbridge was a member of an old, illustrious Detroit family and a rich business man. Socially he was a monarch in the innermost circles—the Trowbridges, the Palmers, with Judge Benjamin Witherell and the John R. Williamses. In his political contacts with

Mason's administration he had been very careful to keep his hands clean, and as a result he was respected and trusted. He was the toughest opponent the Whigs could muster, and as Mason pondered his prospects he had doubts for the first time of his own ability to win through.

Trowbridge was thirty-seven years of age at the time, and Mayor of Detroit. He had become a well-known figure during the cholera epidemics, wherein he had fought the scourge as violently as Mason; both of them tried to stamp it out by sheer energy. The people loved him for what he had done for them, and in Detroit he was as popular as Mason ever was. Topping this heavy-calibre ticket, the Whigs for the first time had a theoretically unbeatable campaign issue—the terrible panic which was wiping away everyone's savings and causing bankruptcies and suicides. Added to that was the corrupted condition of the banks, for which the Democrats were blamed. The Whigs were out to win in 1837, and expected to sweep the State.

In their convention summary they called upon every right-thinking citizen to "extricate the government from the control of incompetence and impending war". On this alarming note the campaign swung into motion.

Records say it was "a campaign of the bitterest invective of the most uncompromising personal character . . . no move in the so-called game of politics was overlooked . . . no charge that could be predicated upon a semblance of fact seems to have been understated." No holds were barred, and there was no referee to call time out. Mason with disgust rolled up his sleeves and donned his thickest boots, cocked his silk hat on the back of his aristocratic brow, and waded in.

The Democrats invented a bogus party as an offshoot to the Whigs and tried to split the Whig vote. They put Woodbridge's unpopular name on the ticket for Governor, which was their undoing. Woodbridge promptly exposed the trick and denied that he had any intention of running. Then the Whigs tried the same trick with the Democrats, and succeeded very well.

They brought out a scandal sheet called *The Spy in Michigan*, which purported to expose a lot of skulduggery on Mason's part. This paper demanded a reform movement among the Democrats to repudiate Mason and his whole ticket. With plenty of Whig cash, a party of "Simon-Pure Democrats" was actually organized and registered. It nominated Edward Ellis of Monroe for Governor. Mr. Ellis had been a Whig member of the Constitutional Convention and had a modicum of vote-getting power. Anyhow he started stumping the counties, preaching for reform in the State government. He threatened to slice off a considerable share of Mason's rural support.

Mason countered this by getting the influential Detroit Young Men's Society to hold a State convention of "Young Democrats", which endorsed him for re-election and commended his administration. It gained considerable support from young voters who were with Mason because of his youth, aside from politics. The trick partly counterbalanced Ellis and his outlaw Democrats, but there being no such thing as a "Young Whig" their attempt to copy the youth movement idea flopped.

Meanwhile the scurrilous libel sheet called *The Spy in Michigan* was putting forth page after page of vile personal abuse of Mason as a man. "Mason came here as a boy of about nineteen," it stated, "born and raised in Kentucky with all the attributes of a domineering population. His education was very imperfect and it is believed that he could not have written a page of respectable English. His morals were still worse, but entirely in the Southern style. . . ."

People who read this wondered why Mason didn't take a musket and shoot the liver out of the anonymous author of this slander. He was described in every other paragraph as a hard drinker. "His time has been too much taken up with the tavern, the ball-alley and the theater to admit of much mental cultivation," the sheet continued. Mason's friends writhed.

Friendly editors made matters worse by quoting at length from this drivel and demanding an end to it. One editorial

said: "A more malicious, malignant and damnable falsehood was never penned by any man." Shortly all the newspapers, Whig and Democrat, were calling each other knaves, liars and scoundrels. Mason was said to have been a traitor to the State when he was forced to abandon claims to the "Toledo Strip". Another said that Mason had been voted \$500 annual house rent by the Legislature, which was an outrage, unconstitutional and unethical, besides being expensive. That wasn't so; it was just something to raise a fuss about at election time.

The Whig papers, apparently by agreement and out of whole cloth, simultaneously printed a story that Mason had been caught buying votes at a previous election (for the first Congressman). They hired an artist to paint a picture of the alleged scene. It showed a man clearly recognizable as Mason slipping a bank note to a drunk with a whiskey jug. They exhibited the picture everywhere, captioned: "First Michigan Election".

This could not be allowed to pass. Mason demanded an apology. In reply the Whigs produced a newspaperman named G. L. Whitney, of Rochester, New York, who said he "happened to be visiting in Detroit at the time". He identified the bribetaker as a John Weese, a Detroit meatcutter. He said he had seen Mason give Weese a bank note on election day in front of the National Hotel. The Democratic *Free Press* kept its columns open waiting for Mason's answer. The Governor wrote an impatient note which stated that he had indeed given Weese a dollar, not on election day but on the day following. He said Weese had approached him as he was about to enter the hotel, asking for the loan of a dollar. Mason had accommodated him, he said. Weese was located, and admitted that he had not paid the dollar back. He said he thought he borrowed it a week after election day.

There was so much excitement about the Whig accusation that Mason saw a chance to editorialize about the whole conduct of the campaign. He wrote to the *Free Press* saying that he had kept silent throughout all the unwarranted attacks upon him because to deny them would do more harm than

good. They were all unjust, Mason declared, as anyone who knew him would testify. It was with regret that he saw the campaign degenerating into a mud-slinging alley fight. As for himself, he would have none of it. He was going to run a clean campaign, without impeaching anybody's motives, questioning his character or involving his good name. He concluded that it was not "an act of moral turpitude to entertain political opinions different from those of my opponents".

The Whigs retorted that he was hyper-sensitive and enjoyed seeing his name in the papers. But the statement rallied all the Democrats, besides many "mugwumps" or neutrals, to his defense. In October a committee of many non-partisan Detroit people bought advertising space in the papers to denounce the whole conduct of the Whig campaign. They were tired, they said, of the "misrepresentation and slander" going around about Mason. They demanded an end to the Whig policy of defamation.

Mason followed this advertisement with a slow, leisurely wagon trip through the southern part of the State, speaking from town-hall steps and bandstands, anywhere there was a platform and a few people. He shook hands with friends, remembered anecdotes about his previous association with them. They remembered, too. Campaigning entirely on personal popularity, Mason managed to undo some of the harm generated by the violence of the Whig attacks. He believed his prestige had not been smashed.

In September, just before the election, he was recalled to his office on a matter connected with the long-awaited development program. The Legislature had passed a bill authorizing the State to negotiate a loan for \$5,000,000 in New York, by means of a bond issue. The program was ready, contracts were drawn up, crews were being hired. The money was needed at once. They assured Mason that since he had no one in the administration who could handle such a job excepting himself, he would have to go to New York immediately. In vain he pointed to the lackadaisical showing of the Democrats in the campaign and the need for his presence in Michigan until the election. They

replied that it was too bad, but the matter was urgent. Regretfully he packed a bag and left. He was gone a month.

When he returned in October, Mason was full of smiles, optimistic, and said he had accomplished something. No, he had not negotiated the loan, but it was approved and almost ready. The Legislature would be asked to make a slight change in the law so that interest could be made payable in Europe as well as in New York. In that way, he said, New York bankers could place part of the bonds among European money markets. After the election he would have to go again, he said, and conclude the deal.

This trip of Governor Mason's had an important bearing on the outcome of the election. It is the opinion of most students of Michigan history that by coming up with this political plum in his mouth in late October, Mason changed probable defeat into a good chance of victory. The Whig machine's slander line was beginning to run down; they had called him everything they could think of and had run out of adjectives. The best they could do in the last few weeks was to print and distribute a handbill saying that U. S. Marshal Conrad Ten Eyck was coming to throw all the settlers off their land because of a pretended fault in their titles, and that he was trying to get \$13,000 from the State for the railroad right-of-way across his farm. People saved some of these for curiosities.

Election Day in Detroit was "a day of great excitement". The Whigs were on the streets first with a parade featuring a replica of the USS *Constitution* sailing up Woodward Avenue, commanded by Captain Robert Wagstaff in costume. It was preceded by a band and followed by all the Whig district leaders, shouting for Trowbridge and victory. They bore aloft huge banners carrying their slogans. The Democrats started their parade from a different part of town. They had several floats drawn by yokes of oxen, with banners demanding gold and silver coin in circulation. These inevitably collided with the Whig parade and precipitated the usual election day battle, which on this occasion cost Detroit only about two hundred casualties. Mason, standing on the sidewalk, saw Mr. Trow-

bridge on his way to the voting place. He came out and took Trowbridge's arm, saying: "Come, let's go and vote for one another." The crowd parted to let the pair pass and, says the newspaper, "the multitude cheered".

Mason was re-elected, but with difficulty. He barely squeaked through. The official tabulation gave him 15,314 to Trowbridge's 14,800 votes. He carried the city of Detroit, but lost Wayne County, in which the city is located. He lost Washtenaw County, of which Ann Arbor was the county seat. His only crumb of comfort came from the showing of Edward Ellis, the Whig-paid bogus Democrat, who polled only 311 votes.

His loyal helpers rode to victory with him. Mundy was re-elected. The Democrats retained a small majority in the Legislature, although the Whigs had gained surprisingly in the House. Old Woodbridge had gotten himself elected to the State Senate, which disturbed Mason deeply. As he gazed at Woodbridge after the election, Mason was thoughtful.

The old man's eyes were watery and expressionless.

CHAPTER X

WILDCAT MONEY

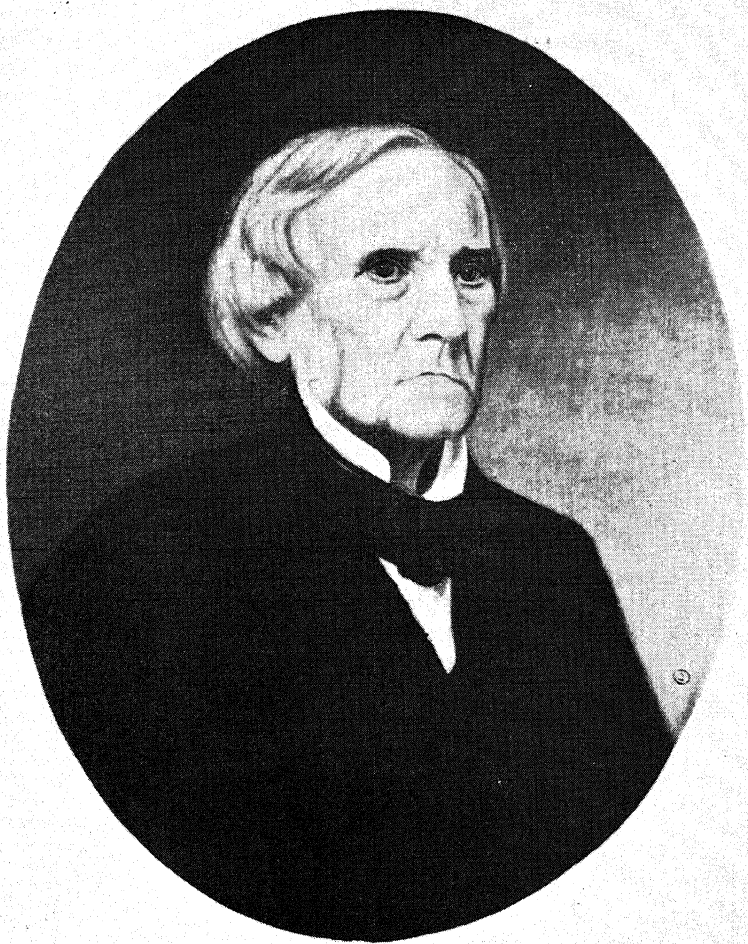
I

IT IS HARD enough to be a businessman when conditions are ideal. Business in general seems to collect blights the way a dog collects fleas. In 1837 it was not taxation which caused the businessmen of the time to grow haggard and gray, nor labor, nor scarcity of materials. The blight was far worse; so much so that in examining the wildcat-money situation in Michigan during that year it is difficult to understand how any trade was conducted at all.

The term "wildcat" is an officially accepted one, and was used in the report of Mason's banking commissioners. No other word expressed so well the effect of these savage conditions upon the people. A wildcat is always hostile, preys on its own kind, lives in isolated areas and is a serious menace to anyone unlucky enough to encounter it. So, also, was the wildcat bank. In 1837, Michigan was trying to tame it.

The State had done all it could do to pen up these wildcat banks by the Banking Act passed by the preceding Legislature in the spring of 1837. Mason clearly warned the people, in his annual message, by telling them that they were on the wrong path and that aids to small-town banks did not mean unrestricted license to flood the State with worthless notes. He repeated at intervals his opinion that too many banks were springing up in little out-of-the-way towns where supervision was difficult and the far-reaching effects of their distribution of bank notes hard to control.

He could not do everything himself. The time had come for him to begin the actual construction of the State railroad network, authorized a long time before. He had staggered along after the Banking Commissioner resigned, only to be forced



WILLIAM WOODBRIDGE.

From the official portrait now in Lansing.

to ask help from individual legislators in their free time, for which he could not authorize payment. In 1837 he was granted a new Board of three Banking Examiners, but could find only two who would actually saddle up and try to find out what was happening. Kintzing Pritchette was one of them, actuated no doubt more by sympathy for Mason's plight than by the pecuniary reward of the job. Alpheus Felch of Monroe was the other.

Mr. Felch was a great boon to Mason, and to the State of Michigan for a decade afterward. He was a small, mild fellow, with a high forehead and a long shock of hair on the back of his head hanging down over his collar like a misplaced toupee. He had thick spectacles, and a determination like the steel jaws of a bear trap. Digby Bell, the third Examiner, joined the pair some months later.

The Banking Act said that any twelve people residing in the same county could start a bank, provided that they had, or could raise, \$50,000. This privilege was explained long afterward in Dr. Fuller's thesis on the ground that it was an extension of the democratic principle into a field which had long been dominated by special privilege; the chief province of the Big Names who had milked the country dry during the era of the United States Bank. Whatever it was, the response was quick and the banks which sprang up under the Act were strange, mysterious institutions.

Pritchette and Felch were patiently trying to find out why the Act had gone wrong. The Panic of 1837 was good enough evidence that the new banks were not succeeding at the task which the framers of the Act visualized. Instead of financing local enterprises, each in its own locality, the banks were flooding the State with notes which looked fishy and became almost worthless when presented at the Bank of Michigan in Detroit for deposit or as security. This bank, with the Farmers' and Mechanics', were the two chartered banks which filled the empty function of a State Depository following the closing of the United States Bank. There was no decent money, no Federal currency except some silver coins for change, and a

few scarce gold pieces which gravitated to the two big banks as security for big bond issues and the like. Few people had gold money.

The Act was bound up tightly with restrictions, and copper-riveted by provisions for frequent examination. It stipulated that at least one third of the bank stock must be owned locally, and that before beginning business all the stock must be subscribed to and thirty per cent of it must be in specie—that is, in gold or silver. The president and directors were bonded; the bank itself was required to furnish proof to the State that it had securities or mortgages on real estate enough to meet the full amount of any bank notes it might have in circulation.

It was the best that Mason and his Legislature could do to provide local banking facilities in the absence of a Federal currency and legal provision for an official State Bank. Mason strongly preferred the latter alternative, but the Legislature insistently kept him from organizing it on the ground that it would shortly become another United States Bank, controlled by ten or twelve directors who would become fantastically rich at the expense of local businessmen.

A storekeeper in a small town, during the course of an average day, would be offered bank notes from a dozen strange banks of which he had never heard. He knew that his own local bank did not have a too-secure specie backlog, and he suspected that these strange institutions didn't, either. Hence he took the bank notes, if at all, only under a heavy discount, which promptly produced inflation and subsequent panic.

Even after the election of 1837 when the Panic had subsided and the people were turning eagerly to the advent of the development program, the inflation continued. Hard money became so scarce that in Michigan many merchants took hacksaws and sawed up silver dollars into halves, quarters and eighths. This "cut money" was accepted at par and became a widespread medium of local exchange. Another merchant, who handled a large volume of purely local business with farmers of his county, turned out great numbers of wooden bowls of various sizes on a lathe. He made change with these,

and the farmers accepted them as legal tender at his store. They circulated at par throughout the county.

Out of brass-bound horsehair trunks, the people revived ancient Territorial "shinplasters" bearing the U. S. seal and issued in fractional amounts like ten cents, twenty-five cents, fifty cents. These curiosities appeared in merchants' tills and were accepted everywhere, while the newly printed notes of the wildcats were taken grudgingly, with discounts.

Under this handicap, and with many misgivings, Mason began to get up steam in the boiler of his development program. The Legislature, in appropriating \$400,000 of State funds and authorizing a bond issue of \$5,000,000 more, had referred to the plan as the "public-development" program. Mason coined the phrase "Internal Improvements". It became known as his Internal Improvements plan, and the title stuck.

At the outset he discovered that private enterprise was getting nowhere with the chief item in the project, the Detroit and St. Joseph Rail Road. The promoters had spent \$117,000 on it, and had completed only thirteen miles of grading between Detroit and Ypsilanti, but a good deal of grubbing and clearing remained to be done along the graded stretch. Not a foot of track had been laid. They had, however, built a forge and shop wherein they were turning out car wheels and iron strap for the wooden foundation rails. They had a locomotive, but no cars.

Down at Toledo, the primitive Erie and Kalamazoo Rail Road had finished its line from Toledo to Adrian, Mich. Weary of waiting for a locomotive, from Philadelphia, the company had begun operations with a string of flatcars drawn by teams of horses. The road was an immediate financial success. In the interior of Michigan, the price of Syracuse salt fell from fifteen dollars a barrel to nine, and other heavy supplies in proportion. The demand for passenger accommodation was met by the company very quaintly. It built a double-deck structure that looks top-heavy and dangerous to moderns, with sheepskin-covered seats for the ladies above, and plain wooden benches for the men below. The car had open windows

to give the tobacco spitters plenty of room. This apparition was named the "Pleasure Car".

When the locomotive arrived it was the wonder of Michigan. It was rated at twenty horsepower, and burned wood which the fireman collected from the farmers' woodlots along the route. The "Pleasure Car" was not a success. It continually jumped the track and once turned over on a curve. After its novelty had worn off, it was replaced by a string of regular Concord stagecoaches mounted on railroad wheels. Six of them made up the train. The conductor had a catwalk outside, and hopped from car to car clinging to the windows, with his whiskers blowing backward in the breeze.

The success of this road stimulated the promoters of the Detroit and St. Joseph, but they could not finance an undertaking so colossal. Ruin and bankruptcy lay before them. After some consultation with Mason, they agreed to sell the company to the State for the sum of \$139,802.79. The Legislature agreed with Mason that the State ought to finance it. Hence, in 1837, the Detroit and St. Joseph Rail Road, its charter and its right-of-way, became the property of the State under the title: "Michigan Central". At the same time, the Erie and Kalamazoo found itself in difficulties. It was showing a paper profit on every run, but the insane pattern of bank notes turned in by its conductors and freight agents made no sense to the company's auditors or creditors. It was a relief to the company to receive an offer from Mason to absorb it as part of the State's network. It was taken over on a lease, with the original company officers continuing in its management. A year or two later it became, according to its records, "hopelessly bankrupt," and was leased to the new Michigan Southern forever.

At the time these deals were being completed, Mason must have been on the verge of panic himself. He had only \$400,000 appropriated funds to work with, and only a dream of floating his \$5,000,000 loan in New York. He had promised everyone that the deal was going through. He had been re-elected largely on the strength of that promise. Now, great stretches of uncompleted rights-of-way and bankrupt railroads were falling

into his lap, with an insistent public clamor for immediate completion. Other projects, notably a network of canals, demanded financing and awarding of contracts. Congress had backed down on its promise to appropriate funds for the St. Mary's Falls canal connecting Lake Michigan with Lake Superior. Mason had to find more money to begin that fearful engineering struggle.

He, like many Governors since, had no idea where the money was to come from. He must fulfil his pledge. Contracts must be signed, men employed, equipment procured. The railroad to St. Joseph was the biggest job. Very well, he would start on that first. He would tell the Legislature frankly that if he were to be held responsible for the improvements they wanted, they'd have to support him with the necessary appropriations. He began drafting his annual message to the Legislature for the year 1838, to be delivered shortly after the New Year's holiday.

This message was quite a lengthy one, and had to be prepared with the greatest care. He was alone in his house except for two colored house servants, and a handyman who brought in coal for the fireplaces. He had plenty of uninterrupted hours to analyze what he thought the State ought to do, and to enumerate the things they expected him to construct. Emily and his mother had left for New Orleans, from which delightful city they wrote him that "...Papa has established us in the St. Charles Hotel" and that they were being entertained royally by the wealthy land speculators who were working with John T. at the time. Mason wrote in reply that he had been to New York on business connected with floating the bond issue, and that he, too, had met a good many interesting people. He knew Emily would like them. There was Washington Irving, for example, a director of several banks and a very wealthy man. There was a rich leather merchant named Thaddeus Phelps, who was a member of the syndicate which was helping to float the bond issue. While visiting at his home, Mason wrote, he had met a very sweet girl, whose name was Julia. According to him, Julia Phelps had "all the charms that were ever bestowed

upon the daughters of Eve . . . in sweetness and real worth, she surpasses every other woman I have ever known. . . .”

He should have had his mind completely free to concentrate on his preparation of the message. The success of his whole second term as Governor would hinge on whether or not he could sell his demands to the Legislature and get the State's financial tangles straightened out so that a few contractors could be paid. That was a full-time job. It was a poor time for Stevens T. Mason to fall in love.

Separated from Julia by nearly a thousand miles, Mason could only dream of seeing her again when some excuse warranted a future trip to the big city. He did not keep a diary, as Emily did, and hence we do not know just how he felt about the affair when he unveiled his budding romance in an impulsive letter to Emily. Julia Phelps was unquestionably the first girl in his life who had aroused enough interest to become the subject of gushing letters to Emily. If there had been the usual parade of adolescent affairs which most of us experience at some time or other, we would have known it. A man who lived in the all-revealing public glare which spotlighted Mason could not take a social drink at a tavern without reading about it the following day in a newspaper. If he stopped and spoke to a child, the incident became a matter of ponderous public record. At this period, in fact, his hostile Whig minority in the Legislative House was howling at his heels over the “five-quarter Mason” alleged overpayment. A love affair, or even any noticeable attention shown to a Detroit girl, would have become the subject of nosy Whig scrutiny and loud Democratic defense. Unless the records are incomplete, which seems unlikely, Mason at the age of twenty-six was a virgin.

He was writing to Miss Julia Phelps as often as he was writing to Emily, and trying to keep the tender words of love from affecting the weighty phraseology of his message to the Legislature. In reading the message we do not discover any traces of passion in it. Perhaps he wrote the message in his office, and wrote to Julia from his house. We cannot but marvel at Mason's talent for remembering and keeping distinct the

details of so many different problems which overcame him simultaneously.

Not only was part of his mind and most of his heart on Julia, but some of his mental energy had to grapple with the embarrassing discoveries of his Banking Examiners while another part was watching Canada, across the river, where the Patriot War was brewing a storm cloud of trouble. What concentration he had left, which was some, was devoted to the \$5,000,000 bond issue, the construction of three railroads and two canals, the rising bitterness of the Whigs and their indication of open revolt soon, and such things as what terrible punishment to inflict on a Lenawee County constable who had just attached the State's brand-new passenger coach on a judge's order.

Snatching a few spare moments from these varying puzzles, he wrote his message and delivered it when the Legislature met in January, 1838. For the first time in his career as Governor, he faced a noisy and unreasonable stubborn Whig bloc which used devious parliamentary tricks to embarrass him. The "five-quarter Mason" argument broke out at the opening of the session. He demanded a board of inquiry to examine the records. This committee, of which Woodbridge was a member, absolved him and reported that somebody had been starting rumors about him which were not true. When this report was read to the House, the Whigs began a noisy demonstration. The Whig leader, Jacob M. Howard, tried to raise a point that by asking for an investigation of the charges against him, Mason was guilty of "abridging the freedom of discussion". They also said that such a demand was "despotic" and "no part of his official duties".

Mason gazed at these violent politicians with mounting suspicion. He couldn't make sense out of anything they said. Most of their babbling was composed of inane attacks like these—anything to appear to be whacking Mason constantly. They would probably protest and attack anything he said. In delivering his message he was extremely cautious. At the outset he appealed to them publicly for co-operation, reminding them

of the vile things they had said about him during the election campaign. He trusted to the good sense of the people to correct wrongs of this kind done to him personally. He thought there was enough trouble in the State government without borrowing more.

The State was in the red by \$13,353.68. This, he said, was because the counties hadn't paid their share of the tax levies. He wanted a change in the tax law which would give the State power to collect it. Next, he began on the Internal Improvements project. In the Illinois Legislature there was a young lawyer named Abraham Lincoln who, Mason thought, was a coming man. He had sponsored a similar program there, and the State had backed him. By all means, he said, finish the work we've started but don't add any more projects until we see where the money is coming from. By January 1, 1838, he had been given only \$438,551.49 in appropriations and had earmarked all but \$116,000 of it for immediate payrolls and contracts. Added to those, the Legislature now wanted three dubious railroads, two canals and a list of highway projects undertaken at once.

It just couldn't be done, the message declared. Even with the new \$5,000,000 bond issue there would be no money for these things. He reminded the solons that they were committed to begin the St. Mary's Falls Canal, at the Soo, and extend the Detroit railroad to St. Joseph, and five million would not complete either of these projects. The banks were in a turmoil, and he had not received the support he needed from local bankers in enforcing the Act. He pointed out that he had approved the exact banking law the Legislature had wanted; one that would "destroy the odious features of monopoly and give equal rights to all classes of the community". But the Act was being winked at and often ignored; abused by the very people who should be helping to enforce it.

"It becomes your duty to guard against these evils," he warned them. "The productive labor of the community is the true foundation of all the capital, and the banks are a consequence, rather than a cause, of our wealth. Multiplication of

banks and bank paper does not produce wealth. The attempt to substitute paper for real capital disturbs the natural laws of trade and is always attended with fluctuations and revulsions."

He made his remarks as strong as he thought he could get away with. He saw trouble coming, and he wanted to be on record, in a State document, as foreseeing it and pointing out how to lessen the effects. If his advice went unheeded, he had a scapegoat in the Legislature.

The Whigs introduced a minority resolution, claiming that Mason was "unschooled in the elements of economics" and that he seemed bent on ruining trade, stopping new promotions and plunging the State into financial chaos. Mason, his lips tightly compressed, said nothing. He needed no further tirades from the Whigs to see that they were out to discredit him, somehow.

2

"Abolish the ancient Territorial statute calling for imprisonment for debt," Mason told the Legislature. "You can't blame a man for falling into debt if the State's money is no good."

Just how rotten Michigan money really was, became known when the Banking Examiners returned to Detroit with their sad story. Not in the realm of fantasy would such a story be accepted. It was like a dream. Mason, his heart pounding, demanded names, facts, figures, signed statements. He got a report that blew the roof off his little capitol and focussed all the Eastern newspapers' attention on Michigan until the Mason stomach rebelled. Looking at that report actually made him sick.

The wildcats couldn't be tamed, but they had been caged. Every bank in the State, chartered under the Act of 1837, was closed. Bankers were in jail; bonding companies were suing to avoid payment; "hell was popping".

The report exuded a nauseating stench. This was how his people had repaid him for "extending the democratic principle".

into the banking field. Rottenness, corruption, thievery, chicanery, gross abuse of confidence, outright defiance of the law—these were the minor consequences. What struck Mason, as he held the report with trembling hands, was the awful collapse of his belief in “the good sense of the people”. The people, faced with temptation, had let him down. Mason was to be held responsible.

The leading citizens had done this: the men people trusted to invest their money; the very persons who had been demanding railroads, canals and expensive improvements. They were the ones. They were swindlers. They had betrayed their towns, their neighbors, their State.

Examples poured around his dazed head like bricks. Here was the Farmers’ Bank of Homer, in Calhoun County. It was the first bank chartered under the Act. It had begun business in August, 1837, with a reputed capital of \$100,000. The village had a store, a sawmill, a gristmill, a post office and about two hundred inhabitants scattered all over the township. It never saw \$100,000; it never had any assets, but it promoted enough money to buy a bale of beautiful bank notes from an engraving company in New York. It did not have a banking building or a safe. But its worthless notes were all over the State.

There was the Farmers’ and Merchants’ Bank of St. Joseph, trying to confuse people by adopting a name like the sound and respected Farmers’ and Mechanics’ Bank of Detroit. It was not found in St. Joseph, but at Centerville, a crossroads with a post office in a general store. The institution didn’t even pretend to comply with the law. It was just a gang of twelve signers and a bale of bills. The investigators found \$19,860 of this gang’s worthless notes in circulation before anyone knew what was happening. The Attorney General said of this swindle: “These notes were sent forth with a lie upon their very faces, as they purported to be on a bank which in truth had no legal existence and which never possessed, it is believed, one cent of real capital and which had nothing to sustain it but the effrontery and fraud of its principal founder.”

Banks were flooding the State with this stuff. They claimed to be thriving financial institutions in places which did not exist, and never had. The Bank of Sandstone printed and distributed \$38,000 worth of notes before the investigators discovered that there was no bank; the signers had gotten their bundle of bills and had ridden at high speed to faraway towns to buy up good merchandise as fast as possible before the merchants refused their fraudulent bills. It never had any specie, either owned or borrowed. It was never located at Sandstone, but at the near-by village of Barry. The Bank of Shiawssee was comparatively affluent. It started business with seven copper pennies as its "specie" and circulated a fortune in bogus bills.

For bona fide "big business", the investigators thought they should tip their tall hats to the Jackson County Bank at Jackson. Located in a rapidly growing town, it boasted a banking office, a strongbox and depositors. But it had \$70,000 of its bank notes in circulation before the alert Mr. Felch grew curious about its specie. He was shown a row of padlocked boxes, which when opened displayed the gleam of sunshine on heaps of silver coins. Mr. Felch was suspicious by nature. He thrust in his hand, and discovered that the boxes were full of scrap iron and nails, with a sprinkling of coins on top. Even those boxes weren't genuine. During the examination one of the directors told Mr. Felch that they were the property of the bank. After he had gone, this man brought suit to recover the boxes, claiming that they had been his property all along.

While the inquisition was thus exposing these transparent fakes, pandemonium reigned throughout all the places where the wildcats had been whelped. If Pritchette and Felch were at Dearbornville, for example, trying to find the stock said to have been put up by the Wildcat Wayne County Bank, news of their presence was hurried down the road. By the time they had discovered that the Wayne County Bank was a phony, and had closed it, all the banks along the road to Ann Arbor had been alerted. The Wayne County Bank was a scheme whereby twelve men wrote checks to each other to set up the

bank, ordered their pile of bank notes, then destroyed their checks. Mr. Felch said that while he was en route from Wayne to Ypsilanti, a man in a buckboard wagon passed him on the road driving like all get-out, with a keg lashed to the wagon. The keg turned out to be full of genuine specie, and it stood on the floor of the Ypsilanti wildcat looking very innocent. They went to Pontiac. It passed them on the road again, and was waiting for them in that city. Mr. Felch recognized it at the Oakland County Bank at Pontiac and became curious about it. It was full of very old French and Spanish gold, minted dollars, and French gold louis. The Pontiac bank claimed that it was theirs; their records showed that the bank had been organized with \$5,000 in specie and a "specie certificate" for \$10,000. The certificate was no good. So the directors credited the \$5,000, then took the keg out of the back door and brought it in the front door, and deposited another \$5,000. They repeated the stunt, and had \$15,000 on their books. Then they spirited the keg out the back window while Mr. Felch was still in the place, hurried it on ahead of him, and it was waiting for him in the Bank of Saline. The same \$10,000 specie certificate which he had refused to credit was offered to him in five different banks. The Bank of Saline got it with the specie keg from Pontiac. Both items went to the Lapeer Bank, where they were on the books as that bank's entire paid-in capital. Both of them returned to Pontiac and posed as the capital of the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank of Pontiac. The keg was full of old coins out of some hoarder's attic, worth more as curiosities than as currency. The certificate was drawn originally by some wealthy man who had that much specie on deposit somewhere. But it was not specie and could not pass as such.

In the Act there was a provision for redeeming the notes of these banks by requiring them to maintain enough securities, or first-mortgage real-estate bonds, to redeem every dollar they had in circulation. When the Examiners attempted to find some of this pawned real estate, they ran into situations like that of the Bank of Lake St. Clair.

This was a mythical bank in a mythical town. Pritchette and Digby Bell, after searching all over Macomb County, located a Mr. Conger, who admitted that he was president of the wildcat. He had made the engraving company take its own worthless notes for payment. The bank? Oh, yes; well, you see it was like this. He had planned to build a bank building in Belvedere, a plot of land at the mouth of the Clinton River, where it joined Lake St. Clair. No, there was no town there. It was flooded; it would have to be drained first. The stock of the Bank of Lake St. Clair was well watered. Ha ha!

The Shiawassee Bank put up as security for \$22,000 worth of wildcat bank notes a "one-fortieth interest" in the "City of Portsmouth". This was a purely paper real-estate development in which the promoters were trying to sell stock. It involved quite a number of well-known people. Pritchette's face was red when he found among them the fancy scrolled autograph of Stevens T. Mason.

Even the rock-ribbed, impregnable institution known as the Bank of Detroit, the one bank chartered under the Act which was set up to survive, was victimized. In its safe the investigators found evidence that it had accepted mortgages on lots in the imaginary village of Cascade, in Kent County, and on another called White Rock City, in Sanilac County, as a chaser, no doubt. The Commercial Bank of St. Joseph had listed as securities \$60,000 worth of mortgages on twenty-eight city lots worth at most \$50 apiece. Bank strongboxes were crammed with mortgages on land in purely fictional and unsettled geographical names like Kensington, Gibraltar, Singapore, Brest, Suez and other Asiatic and European points that their promoters recalled out of school geographies.

Few of the wildcats had any money on deposit. It was a case of organize, get a charter, buy as many bank notes in New York as the backers could pay for, and get them into circulation. Some of the banks which had funds shown on deposit were discovered to have private arrangements with the depositors whereby they received their deposits back, but left them on the bank's books. Typical was the case of the Lenawee County

Bank, which began with \$30,000 of actual capital paid in. As soon as the charter arrived, the money was withdrawn and handed back to the original owners. To cover it on the books, a promissory note was entered for this amount and signed by a man in Toledo, where he was safe from inquiry under Michigan law. The books showed that the bank had \$13,210 worth of notes in circulation. But Mr. Felch discovered about \$6,000 more in the pockets of two of the bank's officers, not entered on the books and being used to speculate with privately. The total face value of the bank's notes was \$42,363, with a backlog of \$34.20 in cash.

The prize item in the Felch section of the report, one which he kept talking about even when he was Governor a decade later, was the Bank of Brest. He never quite pinned down the elusive town of Brest on the map, although it was laid out near Monroe and the promoters said that it would be quite a town someday.

When Mr. Felch located the president from records at the time a charter was applied for, he turned up a character named Lewis Godard. At first Mr. Felch thought he had struck gold, literally and figuratively speaking. The books showed \$9,754.92 in metallic gold and silver in its safe. Mr. Felch cooled off, however, when he found that most of it, \$7,497, had been put there the previous day after advance warning had reached Godard that the Examiner was on his way. Mr. Felch, muttering, went away. Suddenly, ten days later, he popped in again without warning and found that \$7,500 had been withdrawn. Godard had been distributing bank notes on the Bank of Brest, and some friend of his had come in with \$7,500 of them for redemption in cash, whereupon Godard said he had paid it out. He had nearly \$75,000 worth of bank notes out, and \$139.80 in the till. The Bank of Brest was holding as security for these notes a mortgage on some lots in the dream village of Brest executed by this same Lewis Godard. It also had securities—a couple of bonds signed by Lewis Godard.

Washtenaw County, which contained the town of Ann Arbor,

had a population in 1837 of about 8,500. During the year, seven wildcat banks were set up there. Their names, and capitalization, were:

Millers' Bank of Washtenaw	\$ 50,000
Bank of Manchester	100,000
Bank of Saline	100,000
Farmers' Bank of Sharon	50,000
Huron River Bank	100,000
Citizens' Bank of Michigan	100,000
Bank of Superior	100,000

Messrs, Felch, Pritchette and Bell left a trail of closed banks and dead wildcats behind them as they whipsawed their way through this forest of financial chicanery. They found that the same men were presidents and directors of several of these invisible institutions simultaneously. When they could not locate the supposed towns where these alleged banks were said to be doing a so-called business, they went to the Secretary of State's office to look in the files of village plans which were registered but not yet executed. In this way they found that Brest was "going to be built" on Stony Creek, seven miles from Monroe. Sandstone was a rotted bridge across Sandstone Creek in Jackson County, where the difficulties of the mud road had inspired local farmers to build an inn and a blacksmith shop. Singapore was the registered name of a development at the mouth of the Kalamazoo River on Lake Michigan. There was a sand bar there, but no sign of habitation. Deep in the trackless forests of Shiawassee County were claim stakes marking the location of a dream village to be called Shiawassee. The whole county had a population of 1,200, but it had five wildcat banks with a total capitalization of \$400,000.

For a time, the only wildcat survivor was the Detroit City Bank, a big institution which was chartered December 26, 1837. It was to be another citadel of financial strength like the Bank of Michigan and the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank. With a capitalization of \$200,000 and a directors' list that

looked like the *Social Register*, it, too, came a cropper when the relentless Felch nose was thrust into its books.

He learned that, out of \$60,000 actually paid in at the time it was founded, \$20,673 was represented by another of those certificates of specie signed by some absent moneylender who could withdraw it any time the whim seized him. The mortgages held by the bank were useless as collateral. So, regretfully, Mr. Felch ordered it to close and reorganize with a better financial foundation. Thus, by the time the Examiners had finished their gruesome business, only four or five banks were open in the entire State and all of them were conservative old houses which had been doing business long before the Banking Act of 1837 had introduced this chaos.

It was a legend in the tamarack stockade at the new Jackson Prison that one of the bankers sent there for fraud told another inmate: "I'll never rest until I get out of here and put that bank back on its feet." The second inmate, probably an honest burglar, responded: "I thought you said you had reformed."

Governor Mason realized that the people he had most trusted to use their "principle of democracy" for the benefit of their local towns, and their neighborly activities, had regarded the Banking Act as a legal invitation to start printing bank notes. It must have been a great temptation to find such a provision in the law. Michigan sharpers soon discovered the joker in the Act; they ordered stacks upon stacks of bank notes, traded them to unsuspecting merchants for goods, and automatically became rich. They were not counterfeiters, because they had a license from the State to buy all the bank notes they liked and distribute as many as they could.

The ingenuity of these wildcat bank promoters was limitless. When they found that their bogus bank notes were going begging at ten cents on the dollar, they began a lively trade swindling each other by selling the whole bank. They gave each other promissory notes for \$100,000 with no more thought than if they were cutting cards for the drinks. They organized banking associations of several wildcats in a single county, or adjoining villages, and artificially kept their notes

near par by swapping them rapidly back and forth from bank to bank like a baseball going around the infield after a pop fly. Before Messrs. Felch and Pritchette struck them out, they had organized forty such associations, representing a total capitalization of \$3,115,000. Under the law, such an aggregation of banks would have been required to keep on hand \$934,000 in gold and silver specie. There wasn't that much hard money in the entire country west of Cleveland.

One of these wildcatters with a carpetbag full of heavily discounted bank notes found himself at a little inn on Otter Creek, near Monroe. He met a cattle drover just coming back from Detroit after having sold his herd. The drover had a huge bundle of bank notes issued by this wildcatter's bank. He began lamenting his fate, complaining that he didn't know how much the notes were worth, if anything. The wildcatter, bringing out his own collection of notes he knew were no good, said that he, too, was a victim of the pernicious system. He shouted that none of them were worth anything. To prove it, he threw his bundle of notes into the fire, and said: "Good riddance!" The drover, with a sigh, guessed that he might as well do the same, and together the pair watched the pile burn. This brilliant bit of salesmanship on the part of the wildcatter cost him nothing, and earned him several thousand dollars. He did not have to redeem those burned-up notes.

In the summer and fall of 1838, the situation had reached the point where merchants were accepting pencilled IOU's from their old customers and refusing all bank notes. Even the churches paid their sextons in IOU's. Mason realized with a start, after wading through to the bitter end of the Examiners' report, that he had better take some action at once before the State was forced to pay him in IOU's. He sent a copy of the Felch report to the Legislature with a note asking a year's suspension of the Banking Act of 1837, effective immediately. The request was granted.

Incipient panic was quickly quelled when Mason announced that the old-time banks would stay open, and that some wildcats would be reorganized and rechartered under the old laws

as soon as possible. There was a mad rush to get off bank directorships, resign from boards, close up banking associations. Some people of the State took an optimistic view of the furor and, like Judge Thomas M. Cooley, quipped that "no circulating medium ever circulated so rapidly before". Others tried in vain to get the wildcats to give them something—anything—for their notes.

A man who came from Ingham County to Detroit was trying to salvage something from the wreck of his thrift. He wrote in his diary on March 15, 1838:

"Nothing is talked of but the wildcat banks, some of which are showing the stuff they are made of, and are rotten to the core. There is scarcely a single one of the whole number whose bills will be received at the stores for goods, while many a farmer has sold his produce and some even their farms for this worthless trash. Most of the laborers and mechanics hold all their receipts and earnings for the last six months in these worthless rags which they cannot use. We hear almost daily of the arrest of presidents, directors and cashiers for fraud, and injunctions placed upon the banks."

Everyone was frantically trying to unload his wildcat bank notes on someone else. Those who had horses galloped to the most remote towns in the State, where news of the collapse of the wildcats might not have penetrated. Others tried to get some kind of goods—anything at all—for bank notes by the bushel. Only a few were credulous enough to hunt down the furtive wildcatters and try to get something back.

One such person located the president of the Bank of Sandstone at his house in the village of Barry, where he operated a small grindstone shop. He reported that for each ten-dollar bill he received a millstone; for each five-dollar bill he received a grindstone; and for each two-dollar bill a whetstone. He was the most fortunate of any of the wildcatters' victims whose misery blots the record. The vast majority never saw their money again.

Under the most intense pressure he could apply, Mason sent out messengers to round up the chief wildcatters and bring

them to Detroit. Many came voluntarily when they found that if they attempted to delay, a posse might take them forcibly. Many conservative bankers who had been drawn into the excitement by an honest misinterpretation of the Act came to Detroit like penitents, humbly inquiring what they could do to make amends. Hastily organized, they called themselves the "Currency Meeting or Bankers' Convention", and held secret meetings for two days. Nothing was allowed to seep out concerning what they accused each other of doing.

In their report to Mason they were contrite. They said they meant no harm, and that if allowed to resume business they would police themselves voluntarily and see that each bank had the minimum amount of specie and negotiable securities.

Mason angrily refused. He took the opportunity to demand again the organization of a State Bank which would issue legal-tender State bank notes. Once more he was defeated on the point, but the Legislature agreed with him that the wildcats should never be allowed to resume business. Alpheus Felch was elevated to the new title of Auditor-General, and he immediately divided the State into three districts, one for himself and one each for Pritchette and Digby Bell. He and his colleagues scoured the forests all during 1838, making doubly sure that no more attempts were made to do that kind of banking business.

Their report to Governor Mason has been widely publicized over the world, and their opinion of wildcat banks is quoted in many standard textbooks on banking and economics. Certain familiar passages, like the one which follows, are Pritchette's:

"Not even a regiment of examiners could have enforced the Act . . . against the host of bank emissaries who scoured the country to anticipate their coming, and the indefatigable spies who hung upon their path, to which may be added perjuries, as familiar as dicers' oaths, to baffle investigations. Painful and disgusting as the picture appears, it is neither colored nor overcharged, and falls far short of the reality. The result of 'free banking' in Michigan is that, at a low estimate, a mil-

lion dollars in the notes of insolvent banks are due and unavailable in the hands of individuals."

Felch dwelt upon that specie keg. "I grew so familiar with it that I soon recognized every coin it in by the surface markings. Once I saw it being hustled in the back door of a bank which was under investigation at the time. At other times I recognized it in banks which were being examined for the first time, but the proprietors assured me that it was the property of that particular institution and expressed surprise that I had encountered it elsewhere. Most of the coins in it were old ones, minted in foreign countries. It was impossible not to recognize them at once."

"I was up in the dense forests of Shiawassee County," continues Pritchette, "looking for the Exchange Bank. I was lost in a little narrow trail, which I saw was a lumber lane used by loggers to skid their logs to the streams. I came to a fork in the road, and started down one leg of it, almost certain that I had taken the wrong turn. Presently I came to a clearing, and there was a raw pine shack with a sign across it: 'Exchange Bank of Shiawassee.' That was a real wildcat, and I found it in its natural habitat."

Digby Bell was indignant at the claims of the Currency Convention of wildcatters that they had liquidated a large amount of debt by the rapid exchange of these worthless bank notes. "That may be true," he wrote, "but whose debts have they liquidated? Those of the crafty, and the speculative, and by whom? Let every poor man, from his log hut and clearing in the woods, make the emphatic response by holding up to view as the rewards of his labor a handful of promises to pay, which for his purposes are as valueless as a handful of dry leaves under his feet."

Their jointly written section of the report demanded the immediate repeal of the Banking Act. They said it was ineffective to control the sort of people who had taken advantage of it, and "when we reflect that the moral tone of society seems so far sunk as to surround and protect the dishonest and the fraudulent with countenance and support, it imperatively de-

mands that some legislative action should be taken to enable the prompt and vigorous enforcement of the laws, and the making of severe examples of the guilty, no matter how protected or countenanced."

The bountiful farms of Michigan once more came to the rescue of the impoverished citizens. The harvest of 1838 was a record-breaker. Barter systems sprang up which staved off actual hunger, but widespread privation dogged the economic footsteps of the State for years afterward. The era of the wildcats was brief, but terrific. Its impact upon the economic thinking of the time was less than the same experience would produce in our day. The people agreed that the principle of the Act was good, but that unscrupulous sharpers had wrecked the effectiveness of it. They did not see that the Act opened the floodgates to the worst kind of fraud, and that it gave the people a free hand to indulge the most sordid side of their natures—the human impulse to outwit one's neighbor.

Bales of these wildcat bank notes are still scattered around Michigan, to reappear out of attics occasionally. Children of swindled farmers used piles of them to play a game much like a certain popular one of the present day, wherein they clutched wads of \$100 notes and imaginatively bought mills, stores, farms, city houses and even wildcat banks from each other. During the Civil War the notes made a brief reappearance in the pockets of Michigan troops in the South. The Southerners evidently preferred them to Confederate currency because they looked impressive and bore the name of Northern banks. Soldiers bought laces and other luxuries with them and sent them home. There are some of them on exhibition in the State Museum in Lansing, Michigan, but there is a guard on duty to see that they stay in their frames on the wall and never again enter the arteries of Michigan commerce.

3

The excitement of Michigan's pursuit of the wildcat, and the staggering blow of the Examiners' report, left Stevens T.

Mason groggy. He tried to take the people's attention away from the bitter spectacle of widespread individual and corporate bankruptcy by focussing it on the progress reported by the construction crews of the new railroad. Anything referring to railroads was a popular topic. The State's success in actually building a section of track for the new mechanical marvel was cause for a bit of mild celebration. Right at the height of the banking exposure, a stretch of track was opened between Detroit and Ypsilanti, a distance which on the original roadbed was almost thirty miles. This, thought the Boy Governor, would be something that should get the people's minds off their worries even if only temporarily. He decided to make a sort of holiday out of the arrival of the first train at Ypsilanti.

Financially the effort had cost about twice what the contractors had estimated, but Mason realized wearily that State contracts would always turn out like that. He had approved vouchers for some \$400,000 to achieve those thirty miles, and the survey of the route to Ann Arbor. The Detroit and St. Joseph Rail Road Company had spent \$117,000 grading and clearing the right-of-way. The balance represented the expense of the track.

Mason did not know the simplest facts about engineering. He was helpless in the presence of the jargon used by railroaders. They attempted to explain how they got the cars to stay on the track. It was incomprehensible to him. As we see what kind of track they were building in January, 1838, it is incomprehensible to us, too. We build better tracks for little carnival rides than that one. Engineers who would demand money for building track like the Michigan Central in 1838, would be lynched today.

The line between Detroit and Ypsilanti cut through miles of soft, springy swamp land. Settlement was fairly even as far as Conrad Ten Eyck's tavern at Dearbornville, but between that point and Ypsilanti the line was parallel to the old Territorial Road through virgin tamarack and jack-pine forests. The right-of-way was thirty feet wide and graded a few feet above the low, damp surrounding woodland. The grade was

just a dirt embankment about fifteen feet wide, thrown up by laborers with wheelbarrows. It was not tamped or packed because no proper tools existed at that time to pack it hard. Nature did it, by the simple means of weathering it a year or so before the track was laid.

Even then the roadbed was insecure, frequently slipping and forever falling into bumpy hollows. To level the track, the engineers invented what they called the "block system", which had nothing to do with the current railroad signal term. This one was a means whereby vertical holes were dug in the embankment on eight-foot centers lengthwise along the right-of-way, and five feet on centers crosswise. Huge wooden blocks, two feet in diameter, were rammed into these holes and pounded down to a surface depth of eight to ten inches below the grade line. On these wooden foundation blocks they laid two parallel lines of wooden beams fifteen inches square and anywhere from twenty feet to forty feet long, depending upon the log length. These beams were dressed down by carpenters to the exact grade line. They were five feet from centerline to centerline, and with the big wooden blocks they became the foundation for the track.

When the route led through a cut, they dispensed with the foundation blocks and ran the stringers in parallel trenches. Sometimes they struck such soggy ground that they drove piles into the sod and ran the stringers across them. The roadbed went along about three feet above the Territorial Road on a dirt embankment most of the way, but the embankment was built up in places to a height of fourteen feet. The dirt was packed down around the stringers by patting it with shovels; the crossties spiked down, three feet apart, and on the crossties came the rails. They were white-oak stringers, seven inches high by five inches wide. These were carefully mortised into the crossties by hand, carpenters with chisel and mallet sitting on them and whacking away day after day for more than a year to build thirty miles of such hand-built wooden craftsmanship.

When the oak rails were in position, another gang of car-

penters followed with spokeshaves and chamfered off about three quarters of an inch from the inside surface. Strap-iron surfaces were then hammered to the rails with great spikes four and a half inches long, hand-forged by blacksmiths. The strap iron was half an inch by two and a quarter inches wide, and fifteen feet long. When it was all finished, graders built up the grade to within three inches of the strap-iron surface of the rails. The grade was trimmed to fifteen feet in width and the sides carefully banked to a slope of one and a half to one.

Under this expensive and slow system, a railroad across Michigan would have cost more than the State's credit could raise. Years went by while the construction gangs were painstakingly whittling away at these huge timbers. When they finished, they had a roadbed which usually washed out after the first drenching storm, and which in some cases could stand as many as eight little cars travelling as rapidly as fifteen miles per hour.

To the people of Detroit and Ypsilanti, however, it was a masterpiece. Mason had scant time to go out and watch the carpenters trying to level the track by squinting up an eye and squirting tobacco juice at it. He was dashing to the rescue again. The passenger coach which was already on exhibition in Detroit ready to make the first run was replevined by a constable from Monroe, armed with a county-court writ. He served his paper and hauled away his passenger coach. Detroit groaned, and came to Mason demanding that he perform a miracle and create a new coach.

Mason found that the coach had been ordered by the State for its new railroad, and was built in a shop in the East and shipped to Detroit by boat. Now came the constable with his writ, claiming that the River Raisin and Lake Erie Rail Road had placed a prior order with the same car-building shop; that this car was, in fact, the one belonging to that railroad and was being held by Detroit contrary to justice and due process of law, and so forth. Mason had never heard of the River

Raisin and Lake Erie Rail Road, but of necessity he had to watch the car disappear.

In Detroit there lived a craftsman named John G. Hays, who assured the Governor that he could build a better car than that, for less money. Mason told him to get busy; the grand opening was scheduled for February, 1838, and the date, the 3rd, was only a few weeks away. The bunting was going up on the little steep-roofed "depot" on the Michigan Avenue corner of the Campus Martius. The track siding from this little terminal had been built almost in the shadow of the capitol building, and it was there, where Mason could watch him out of the window, that Mr. Hays got busy. He built a passenger car much bigger than the little stagecoach-type affair which the constable had grabbed. This car was the forerunner of the modern railway coach; it had doors fore and aft and held thirty-six passengers. It was a great improvement on anything these primitive railroads had seen. It was painted yellow with a sign "Governor Mason" below the windows.

On February 3rd it was snowing hard, but there was a considerable crowd on hand at the Campus Martius to see the cavalcade set out. The weather was cold; Mason was wearing high leather boots and had his white blanket snuggled up around his ears. He arrived at the depot and waved. The crowd cheered. From around the corner of the depot came the Brady Guards in their new ceremonial uniforms. Inside the car were Ed Mundy and some of the legislators who had been invited, and all the railroad officials. The distinguished guests climbed into the front end of the car and newspapermen filled all the rest of the space in it. The Brady Guards were shouting and milling around looking for space. The stationmaster finally found three regular stagecoach-type cars which were to have supplemented the new one on regular runs. The Guards piled into these. The overflow climbed onto two little flatcars and the open trailer behind the locomotive. They were swarming all over the train, and on the ground the crowd swarmed around the locomotive, gazing at it in awe. The smokestack was eight

feet high; it had a horizontal boiler and a pair of cylinders mounted at a forty-five-degree angle, driving a single pair of high iron wheels. This monster was a new twenty-horse-power model built by Baldwin, of Philadelphia, and called the "Peter Cooper" type. It bore a sign: "Pioneer No. 1." Behind it was an open flat trailer containing a box of cordwood and a cask of water. There was no cab for the crew and nothing between them and the roadbed but a twelve-inch walkway they stood on.

There stood the train: the smoke-belching little engine and its open flatcar; the huge, resplendent "Governor Mason" coach with the Governor himself waving from the front window; three stagecoach-type cars and three flatcars including the locomotive trailer. The Guards were trying to keep warm by dancing around and jostling each other. Departure had been delayed by the search for the flatcars, and it was nearly noon before the engineer yanked the whistle cord and the iron horse screeched. The population moved backward hastily, to give the steam-spouting monster more room. Slowly the tiny locomotive moved away, dragging its noisy load. Then, says the account, "cheers arose from the multitude while from those inside came waves of farewell."

The train wheezed and chuffed along the track for three hours, arriving at Ypsilanti in the midst of a snow flurry. The newspapermen aboard said that at times the train had attained speeds as high as fifteen miles per hour, but could not hold that dizzy pace because of irregularities in the track. When the train came within sight of the much larger crowd waiting at the end of the track at Ypsilanti, such an outburst of cheering arose that the whistle was unheard.

Farmers had brought their families many miles, from all parts of Michigan, to see the great event. "My father told me it was history," an old man recalled many years afterward. "He said no matter how cold it was, we were going to sit in the wagon and be able to say afterward that we had seen Governor Mason, and had seen him arrive on the first train to Ypsilanti."

Another boy in the crowd whose father had lugged him there for the same reason wrote for the Historical Commission files:

"The Michigan Central was finished as far as Ypsilanti, the farthest west of any railroad in the country at that time. To celebrate the event, all the people were invited by the City to a monster barbecue. My father went and took me with him. When we got there, early in the day, we found the one street gaily decorated with flags and a brass band filling the air with music. We next visited the place where an ox was being roasted, over a huge fire, to make sure with our own eyes that we and the multitude present were not to be disappointed of our great dinner we had come so far to share.

"Then we went to the depot to see the arrival of the first passenger train. On it were officers of the road, with Governor Mason and other prominent people who were to speak. A light snow was falling and when the train came in sight on the slight up-grade near the town it presented the novel spectacle of two men sitting on opposite ends of a cross-beam in front of the engine, holding large splint brooms to sweep the snow off the track. That was the first and original snow-plow."

General John Van Fossen, on behalf of the town of Ypsilanti, had written one of those elaborate speeches which were inflicted upon the public on occasions like this, but gratified Mason deeply by presenting it to him in the form of a hand-lettered scroll rather than read it to him. Mason muttered a brief extemporaneous reply; the band played and the multitude attacked the barbecue again. Finally it was time for the train to leave.

It was late in the afternoon and colder than ever, but the snowfall had stopped. The Brady Guards were herded into their little cars and draped over the flatcars; the whistle tooted and the locomotive once more jerked the train into motion. They made a slow and dramatic exit out of Ypsilanti while the band played a farewell.

Everybody agreed that it had been a most satisfactory celebration. Aboard the train everyone was tired but satisfied.

The Guards were pretty sleepy after all the drinks Ypsilanti people had given them. It was therefore a shock to everyone aboard when the train abruptly stalled a few miles out of Ypsilanti.

The big driving wheels of the locomotive had gotten down into one of those hollows in the track, and all hands had to get out and push it. This was exhausting, and it happened several times between Ypsilanti and Dearbornville. By a startling coincidence, the boiler, which had been losing pressure throughout the return trip, sprang a leak just as the train was opposite the big Conrad Ten Eyck tavern at Dearbornville. Of course someone suggested that the entire passenger list get off and buy Governor Mason a drink after all that speechmaking. Governor Mason seconded the motion. While the Governor was delivering another impromptu speech in Ten Eyck's bar about the cussedness of railroads, two teams of horses were procured and hitched to the disgraced locomotive. They couldn't budge it, and six teams had to be located and harnessed to it. The party rescued Mason and helped him aboard. The teams started. Presently one of the teams balked, and the State officials in the big car said that they must be a pair of Whigs. This somehow caused another wave of laughter and a suggestion that it called for another drink.

The special train limped into Detroit about midnight. There was no one on hand to greet it. Perhaps it was just as well.

CHAPTER XI

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

I

MASON's feeling of panic was a normal one, when he contemplated the maze of interlocking tasks he was called upon to perform. His apprehension stemmed from the knowledge that he was over his head. Sometimes, men of true genius appear in the world, to whom is given a sort of intuitive understanding of all things. Mason had to learn everything by experience, or depend upon elemental precepts gleaned from the clumsy textbooks of the time. He had been proved right about the danger to the State from the Banking Act of 1837. If he had been given any support, he would have been proved equally right about his projected Bank of Michigan. Now he must prove he was right in new fields of frenzied finance, of railroad construction, canal and highway engineering.

His only solution to the problem was to confine his thinking to the relation between the Legislature's enthusiastic planning and the State's estimated income. In the spring of 1838 it seemed to him that his desk was always piled high with glittering projects which somebody was lobbying through the Legislature. Every little town and village had the 1838 equivalent of a Chamber of Commerce or a Boosters' Club, an unorganized but noisy group of the chief citizens. During the wild-cat-bank era they had been making fabulous plans for railroads, drainage systems, public buildings and parks. They thought all of this should be paid for by the State. Legislators were supporting each other's pet projects, all aimed at more State funds. Outside of the optimistic village committees, the stage-coach companies were the noisiest pressure group, forever demanding new roads, new bridges and better State maintenance.

During the fall of 1837, Mason had worked out a plan for

combining all the projects the State might conceivably be able to afford. In assigning priorities he had considered transportation first, and railroads the first step in the transportation phase. For heavy local freight, Mason didn't think any form of transport could beat a canal. These, therefore, had second place. Highways and highway improvement received third priority, not from any lack of need, but because with the opening of other forms of transportation, the heavy traffic on the roads would be lightened and the expense of maintaining them would be less.

This was the Mason "Internal Improvements" plan. Looking at it objectively, he could see that it was gaining momentum too rapidly. For example, in railroad construction he had kept the original demand for five big trunk lines down to three. The Detroit and Pontiac would lead to the Northern Railroad, and be extended up to Saginaw Bay to tap all the new settlements in the Bay region. The Detroit and St. Joseph, now the Michigan Central, was following the original line its promoters laid out. Down along the Ohio border, the Commissioners dreamed of combining four of five small projected village-to-village lines into another cross-State trunk line to be called the Michigan Southern.

He succeeded in convincing the Board of Commissioners, empanelled by the Legislature, that his plan was good. On January 23, 1838, they reported to the Legislature that their advisory engineers had followed the Mason suggestions very carefully. Each of the three Commissioners appointed to supervise Internal Improvements had charge of construction in one of the three railroad systems. Levi S. Humphrey was the boss of the Southern; David C. McKinstry handled the Central; and James B. Hunt was the State official in charge of the Northern line. Besides, each of these officials was responsible for supervising construction on the canal projects in his district, and anything else which might be approved. He was the personification of State authority for the Internal Improvements project.

Each, in turn, hired engineers, bought surveying instru-

ments and located construction crews. The Commissioner was his own contractor, and the administration of the project was almost a duplicate of the late WPA of our era. The parallel becomes more striking as the Internal Improvements plan unfolds. Some of the projects on the list had no immediate value and were frankly designed to provide local employment and relief for out-of-the-way communities hardest hit by the wildcat banks. Others were obviously political, being thinly disguised bribes by which the local legislator had bought reelection. Conrad Ten Eyck, one of Mason's good friends, was U. S. marshal by Mason's appointment and also was slated to receive \$13,000 for the railroad right-of-way across his farm. This was the chief motive behind the Whig bombardment of the plan. The Whigs, naturally, wanted all these spoils for themselves.

Some projects Mason tried to rub off the list as being entirely visionary. He recommended only those which he personally would want to justify to the next generation which would have to pay for them. For the survivors on the list, Mason had an enthusiasm and a pride which was almost parental. Let people talk about him as they liked. But one hostile word against any of his pet projects would cause Mason to fly into a rage.

Examining them in the musty archives, we find most of them unworkable. Michigan in 1838 had a total population of about 175,000, distributed over an area as large as England, Scotland and Wales. Detroit, with 10,000 population, was the only city worth the name. Westward and southwestward, new "Cabinet Counties" were sprinkled with ambitious hamlets which were already fading from a promoter's dream to an investor's nightmare. Before the railroad came, little towns at five-mile intervals were economic and agricultural necessities. But the first railroad journey to Ypsilanti proved that trade would henceforth cluster around bigger towns, and many brand-new settlements were doomed to die after a life of less than a decade. Farms were only making a dent in the vast unsettled wilderness that was still Michigan. The sale of five million dollars' worth of public lands in 1837 indicates that

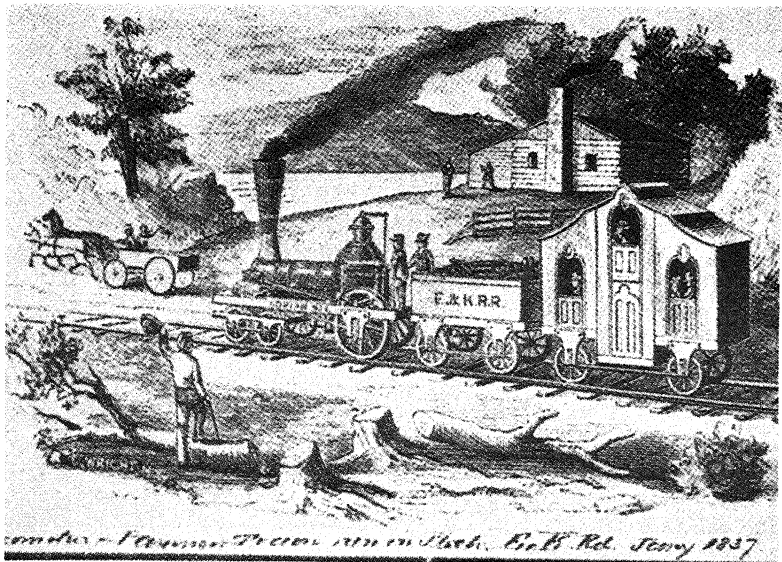
proportionately little of the State was as yet recovered from the forest.

Across this frontier area, Mason proposed to build three parallel railroad systems. With their connecting north-and-south branches, they would give Michigan a greater railroad mileage than all the rest of the Middle Western United States combined. Serving these railroad systems, he wanted a feeder network of canals. The St. Mary's Falls Canal at the Soo was also on the list. Added to canals, Mason visualized improvement of all the navigable rivers of the State, and development of their water power by dams with boat locks around them. The Board of Commissioners told him that the sale of water-power rights would more than pay for the expense.

Adding up these projects already approved by the Legislature, Mason found that Internal Improvements would cost the State nine million dollars. From experience Mason knew that he would have to double that estimate before much construction could be completed. Eighteen, perhaps twenty, million dollars! It was a sum which no one of that day could visualize. Accustomed as we have been during two world wars to juggling billions as if they were straw hats in a vaudeville act, it may be difficult for us to see that this was more than the entire national budget.

The Legislature had finally authorized a five-million-dollar bond issue. This would get some of the work started, and perhaps the State would grow up into the others during the next decade or so. While a glance at the list shows that Mason was thinking far in advance of his time, and preparing a transportation network for a State with a population of several millions, he did not think the list was exorbitant. But of course he had only engineers' estimates of what the work would cost, not auditors' statements of work finally completed. Timidly, like a man reaching for a doorknob in the dark, Mason groped for a handhold which would start the work.

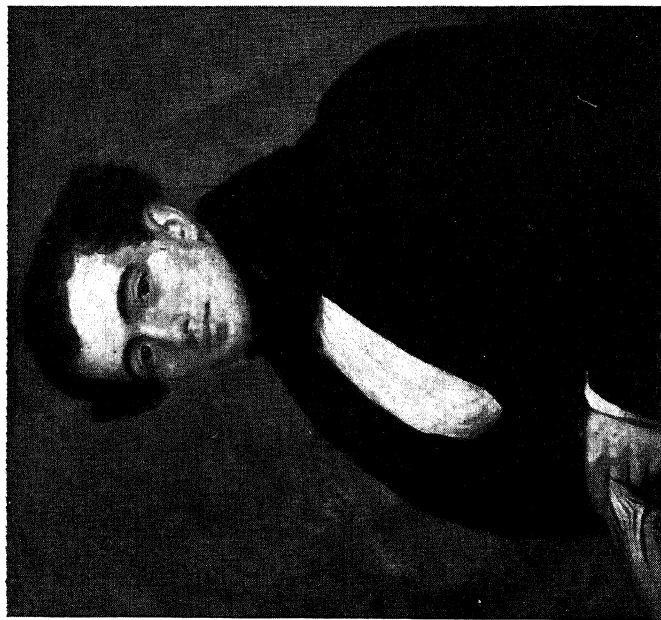
The Michigan Northern was Mason's lead-off item. It was a line beginning at Detroit and running northward to Lake St. Clair at the mouth of the Clinton River, and on up to Port



MICHIGAN'S FIRST RAILROAD TRAIN, on the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad, between Toledo and Adrian. Locomotive arrived 1837; first one west of Buffalo. This car was called the "Pleasure Car" and had sheepskin-covered seats for ladies on the upper level, bare benches for men below. Topheavy and impractical, it was abandoned in 1838.



DETROIT IN 1837 north side of Jefferson Avenue at Griswold Street. From a sketch made in August, 1837, by William A. Raymond for Blois' Gazetteer of Michigan. It was used in 1883 by Silas Farmer in his "History of Detroit." The two churches on the left are on Woodward Avenue, a block east of Griswold. The newly-completed spire of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where Mason worshipped as long as he lived in Detroit, is at the left. The steeple in the center is the First Presbyterian. The twin steeples of St. Ann's Catholic cathedral, on Bates Street, appear to the right.



THE "LOST PORTRAIT" OF GOVERNOR MASON. Located in Tucson, Arizona, this was referred to by Emily Mason as the best portrait of the Governor in existence. It was said to have been painted by Alvin Smith of London in 1837, at the time the artist was commissioned to execute the large state portrait. It hung in Mason's Detroit home, and eventually came into the possession of Stevens T. Mason of Detroit, who took it to Tucson, Arizona, in 1943.



JULIA PHELPS MASON, from a photograph made by Brady, New York, in 1848, when she was thirty and still in mourning.

Huron. From that port on Lake Huron, the road was projected through almost uninhabited forest. Port Huron faced the town of Sarnia, Ontario, across a narrow channel. Sarnia, in turn, was the terminus of a cross-Canada road being built from Lake Ontario and the big cities of Toronto and Montreal. There is a vast volume of traffic across the big suspension bridge there now, but not in Mason's time.

The Northern Railroad was to run from Port Huron, "as nearly as the interest of the State would permit," to the microscopic villages of Lapeer, Flint, Owosso or Corunna, and on to Grand Rapids, on the Grand River. The depth of the river at that village gave rise to hopes of a future steamboat route to Chicago. There wasn't enough population that far north to support a mule-team freight line, but Mason said: "Good navigation exists for steamboats, and the road, when constructed, will receive a very large share of the constantly increasing travel through this State from east to west." In his mind there was the possibility that the road would help to attract settlers to its remote and little-known northern areas. It was expensive, but he was looking to the future. The time to begin was now.

The Board of Commissioners' engineers estimated that they could hew this railroad through the gigantic hardwood forests of northern Michigan for \$3,973 per mile. In Mason's office were completed figures for the Central Railroad's line from Detroit to Ypsilanti, along a natural plain and through a comparatively cleared and settled area. This line had the added advantage of a heavily travelled highway paralleling it, which made transport of supplies and crews easy. Yet it had cost over \$10,000 per mile, even with the cheap wood-block supports and timber stringers. So Mason pooh-poohed that estimate and did not take it seriously. The projected Northern Railroad ran a little over 201 miles, on paper. For the estimated cost, he thought he could build it as far as Flint, a quarter of the total distance.

The Central Railroad, of course, was the biggest item in the entire budget. Its line from Detroit to Ypsilanti was the

most gratifying financial success that Mason could ask. Two trains a day in each direction were showing receipts of more than \$300 a day. The thirty miles of track was bringing in \$326 one day, \$426 the next, \$310 the following day, and for one week, ending July 18, 1838, it earned \$2,957.52. It became so popular that the "Governor Mason" car was advertised as a tourist attraction, and farmers came many days' journey to ride in it.

The graders were working through the graceful hills toward Ann Arbor, and ahead of them the surveyors were puzzling over the gravel drifts of Chelsea. Equipment contracts had been signed which would carry the road to Jackson, seventy-two miles from Detroit. Jackson was named as a division point, with many car-sorting tracks and a shop for the exchange of locomotives. It was felt that seventy-two miles was as far as a locomotive could go in a day without maintenance. Another such division point was projected at Kalamazoo, 112 miles from Detroit. That would carry the road to its terminus at New Buffalo. Arrangements were in progress for a fleet of steamboats to meet all trains, carrying passengers overnight to Chicago.

This is the same route which the Michigan Central has followed for a century or more. At Niles the line was rebuilt through New Buffalo to Michigan City and Chicago about 1866, and the Michigan Central then put over its famous deal for the use of the Chicago water front. From Detroit to Niles the line follows, for scores of miles, the same old roadbed originally surveyed by Mason's engineers in 1837. They wouldn't recognize any part of it now. The railroad has been the biggest factor in the growth of interior Michigan; it was there first, and the towns grew up around it and strung along it like beads on a necklace. Towns which were by-passed by the original Michigan Central, even by as little as five miles, sickened and died. Those located on it grew amazingly.

Today we can see the whole story of pioneer triumphs and tragedy by riding over the line from Detroit to Chicago. The super-luxury "Mercury" deigns to stop only at the im-

portant points, and then just hesitates: Ann Arbor, Jackson, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo and Niles. The "Wolverine" adds stops at Ypsilanti, Albion, Marshall and Dowagiac. The morning mail train stops at more than a score of other towns which survived—Grass Lake, Dexter, Chelsea, Wayne, Dearborn. All of them were founded before 1835, and were there on the Territorial Road, ready, when Mason pushed through his big railroad project. Names like these were Michigan's pride in Mason's day. They were the State's body; the railroad was the artery.

Mason's only worry about the Michigan Central was how to build it faster. A much greater worry was the Michigan Southern, last of the three parallel systems. It was purely political, an expensive club wherewith to deliver another blow to Governor Lucas of Ohio. The Southern began at Monroe and was supposed to end at New Buffalo, on Lake Michigan, in a junction with the Central. On the map it ran through a hundred and fifty miles of nothing much. There was no large volume of traffic for it to handle, because only the route from Monroe to Adrian was settled. From Adrian onward the map bore names like Coldwater, Branch, Centerville, Constantine, Mottville, Adamsville, Edwardsburg, Bertrand and New Buffalo. Most of these hamlets were the alleged location of wildcat banks, which shows how accessible they were. Some, notably Coldwater and Adrian, are lovely, jewel-like towns now. They were not as attractive in 1838, nor as big. The entire area from Monroe to New Buffalo along this route had a population of less than 4,000, but the railroad projected to serve them was 189 miles long and at the absurd engineers' estimates would have cost \$1,496,376. It included two transverse branches, one running north to connect with the other two roads, from Coldwater to a village in Ingham County which had recently been established. It proudly bore the name of Mason.

The other was the Havre branch, from a remote depot on the old Adrian-Toledo line to the entirely imaginary town of Havre, which was to be built one mile north of the Ohio border on Lake Erie. This branch was purely wishful thinking. It was

a hope that a chance might come to divert some of the steady flow of traffic from Toledo and ship it over this all-Michigan route to New Buffalo and thence to Chicago. Toledo was building a bigger railroad, directly to Chicago via South Bend, Indiana, and Michigan City. The jealous Michigan politicians retaliated by dreaming up this parallel railroad a few miles north of the Ohio line. The Commissioners themselves were hard-pressed to explain how a railroad built there could make money. One said:

"One of the principal arguments is . . . that unless our State is first in the field, the States of Ohio and Indiana will construct a railroad from Toledo to Michigan City and Chicago along our southern border and divert the travelling community from our thoroughfare, thus not only completely isolating us, but compelling a large portion of our citizens to find a market for their produce in those States. The Commissioners consider the argument a forceful one in favor of the most southern location as well as for the Southern Road itself."

Mason regarded this proposal as economically ridiculous. Nevertheless, he was committed to it, and would support the Southern Road; he had his own reasons for wishing it success. As he looked at the map, he saw, with his clear blue eyes, that a new port like Havre, just north of Toledo, would indeed be capable of funnelling a large volume of traffic into the State. If it were built deep enough for the new Lake Erie steamboats, he could bring pressure to bear upon their captains to discharge some through freight there instead of at Toledo. It might someday earn its operating costs entirely by through traffic from Lake Erie to Chicago. There was no railroad line out of Buffalo, New York, as yet. All the immense flow of human bodies and farm implements and hardware and clothing for the whole new Northwest travelled across Lake Erie in boats. The volume of it was staggering, even when we see the figures in type in our own day. We try to visualize this never-ending stream of migration filling endless reaches of the unknown West, and the superlatives in the vision seem limited.

Toledo's quick success was possible because it occupied

the only good harbor at the eastern end of the lake, and also by virtue of the Military Road, one of the best highways in America. The road led from Toledo to Chicago. Toledo thus had the port facilities and the inland transport to dominate the situation. Smarting under the treatment given him by Ohio in 1835, Mason heartily wished he could create another Toledo on soil which was forever Michigan's, and build a railroad to dwarf theirs.

He no doubt recognized this childish impulse as economically unsound, and knew it was being pushed at him by the same people who had promoted the wildcat banks. Just the same, he determined to do what he could.

As if these three railroad systems weren't enough, the Commissioners' engineers rabidly advocated a trans-State canal which would connect two of Michigan's biggest rivers and from them took its name—the Clinton and Kalamazoo. This canal, 278 miles long, was shown on a map as leading out of Lake St. Clair above Detroit at the town of Mt. Clemens. It followed the two rivers across the State to the mouth of the Kalamazoo River at Saugatuck, a village far up the lake shore from New Buffalo. Preliminary estimates of the construction of this canal began at \$16,000 a mile, and were shortly revised upward to an average of \$18,000. Even that figure proved embarrassingly low when construction began.

Justification for the canal is easier for us to grasp than for the Southern Railroad. In that era of mud roads and no known system of paving an inter-city highway, canal transport was so much cheaper than freighting by teams on the bad roads that canals throughout the country were enjoying their heyday. The route chosen by the engineers was prepared by nature. Two rivers which tapped most of the settled area of the State, together nearly spanned the width of the peninsula. One has only to look in old newspapers and guides like Blois' to be surprised at the volume of heavy freight which went far into Michigan forests by being poled up swift-rushing streams in flatboats. Rivers were practically the only way to get into the interior of Michigan from the western shore. As early as 1831

there had been steamboats on Lake Michigan, and most of them had penetrated many miles into these rivers. Keelboats, flatboats, "arks" made of tents on rafts, and even little stern-wheel steamers kept the rivers filled with busy traffic.

Both the Kalamazoo and Grand Rivers were choked with this upstream freight-hauling from Lake Michigan inland as far as fifty miles. This was all done without benefit of locks or other aids to navigation, even at rapids and falls where the whole craft had to be lugged painfully over a portage. It was so much cheaper and easier than hauling by road that the volume of such traffic was growing steadily. By providing a two-way canal fifty feet wide between towpaths, the Commissioners could see that the existing traffic would eventually repay the construction cost.

In 1838, canals and railroads went together in the transportation picture just as railroads and airlines supplement each other now. The canal was then fulfilling the function of a railroad of the present day, hauling heavy freight and carrying the bulk of the transportation burden, with the delicate little railroads, developing their dizzy fifteen miles per hour, catering to the passenger who now buys an airline ticket. In 1838, both systems were being developed by the State, and were designed to be supplementary, not competitive. Within the next fifteen years the development of railroad engineering went ahead so rapidly that it doomed all canals. But Mason couldn't foresee that, any more than his father, John T., had foreseen the railroad's effect on industry in Kentucky twenty years previously.

This whole program was Mason's baby from the moment of conception. He became responsible for it when he declared in 1838 that the State ought to become interested as a stockholder in the attempts of private companies to construct some of these railroads. As always when a State attempts to finance any industrial or business venture, it shortly took over everything, and Internal Improvements became a political as well as a financial and engineering problem. Mason found himself

with a veritable tiger cat by the tail which was as dangerous and as tricky as the wildcat banks had been.

He began to finance Internal Improvements without expert aid. At that moment he passed the peak of his career, and took the first step which led him to the toboggan of oblivion.

2

Finance meant New York. New York meant Julia Phelps, and Mason was in a hurry to leave Detroit and rush to her side. Now that the Commissioners had reported, Mason knew what he was expected to finance. Having arrived that far, he knew he would first be compelled to complete the five-million-dollar loan and make no more excuses for not having it ready. Once more the implausible fact that he was only twenty-six years old asserts itself and greatly influences Mason's career. He was eager to get to New York and see Julia. His mind was on Julia when it should have been concentrated fiercely upon the task before him. Because of Julia, he was granting only casual attention to a situation which arose so rapidly that he was confronted suddenly with another crisis—armed rebellion. Mason was embarrassed to admit that he did not know how it had happened.

The armed rebellion was the Patriot War in Canada, now spilling over into Michigan. Since most of the fighting took place along the Detroit River, Mason was regarded by both factions as the leader in Michigan and both appealed to him against their opponents. In vain he wrote to the Canadian authorities that in the United States only the Federal government had the power to engage in war, to declare war or to define what constituted war. His words were unheeded. He was accused by each side of aiding and abetting the other. The unfortunate fact that both factions were using the United States as safe ground wherein to raise volunteers and procure arms put Mason squarely in the middle.

The Patriot War of 1837-38 was in progress at the same

time as the wildcat bank crisis. It was a popular revolution against the privileged upper classes, inspired by much the same brand of treatment the British gave our own colonists prior to 1776. In our own country, the Tories were rich British loyalists who owned most of the property and controlled most of the business. Like any solidly entrenched, influential class, they hotly resisted any change in the colonial administration, even during the war itself in many cases. Thousands of these Tories had sought sanctuary in Canada during, and immediately following, the American Revolution.

There, stripped of their U. S. possessions, they constituted a clamoring section of the Canadian population, presenting huge bills for redress to the British crown. They were, in general, well-educated and bore famous names which seemed to constitute some sort of claim upon Parliament. They, and their children, received huge grants of land. They quickly assumed many of the most important civil and governmental posts in Canada. Historians say that they attempted to run Canada as a sort of closed corporation, in which the less fortunate citizenry were regarded by their newly arrived rulers as a field for exploitation.

No doubt there was another side—the Tories' side. But it has been lost sight of in the mass of grievances piled up against the Tories during the Patriot War. The prime causes of the war must be explained, however, because it became another problem confronting Mason at the busiest stage of his life. We see it, as Mason saw it, as a protest against privilege.

After Quebec became a British province in 1763, it was found to be too big to administer as a unit. In 1791, therefore, at the height of the Tory influx from the United States, it was divided into two provinces called Upper and Lower Canada. The King promised to appoint a Governor for each, and a legislative council. The assembly in each province was to be elected by the people. The seeds of the Patriot War were sown when the Tories kept the terms of this grant from the

people and monopolized all of these new posts, both appointive and elected.

Canadians called this ring the "Family Compact." It included not only the Tories as a class, but most of the clergy and professional men who together were bent on maintaining a severe class structure, as in England. The many thousands of new settlers in Canada objected violently to being treated as peasants. Their objections merely caused the class distinctions to become tighter. The "Family Compact" entrenched itself more securely in power year by year. The settlers were actually being moved off their farm land throughout both provinces because some privileged "Family Compact" member had obtained a grant to it. Each member of the council received 5,000 acres of land for himself and 1,200 more for each of his children. The Established Church was given almost as much land as the whole of England. Millions of acres of the best land and river frontage went to personal and social favorites of the Governors. The Canada Land Company was organized as an exploitation project, something like the flourishing Hudson's Bay Company, and for thirty years it seized every acre of land which might have future value. The rest of Canada's citizens took the leavings.

Controlling both council and assembly in each province, the "Family Compact" had been tightening its hold on Canada ever since 1800. At the close of the War of 1812, Canadian citizens applied at United States border gates for admission, claiming that Canada was too British for admirers of democracy to live in. The United States experiment in popular government had succeeded so well by 1837 that sentiment in Canada for a similar government could no longer be denied.

It was foreseen that any man who so far forgot himself as to challenge his betters in the assemblies over this assumption of privilege would become Canada's No. 1 scapegoat. In 1824 such a man appeared: William Lyon Mackenzie, editor of the *Colonial Advocate* of Toronto. He was elected to the assembly from the County of York, and straightway began agitating

for reform. He was thrown out five times for various parliamentary reasons, and his constituency promptly re-elected him, unanimously, cheering his name in the streets. He had a parallel in the other assembly in Lower Canada—Louis Papineau, around whom all the French-Canadians rallied. Papineau became speaker of the assembly, went to London to implore the cabinet to do something about Canada's untenable situation, but failed.

Mackenzie was regarded by the aroused people of Canada as their George Washington, who would lead them to complete independence from Britain. At first, Mackenzie was horrified at the idea of an open break, but history says that later, about 1837, he began to entertain the idea of armed resistance and a complete overthrow of British authority. It was the only way experience had shown him to dislodge the "Family Compact" class from the hard-pressed Canadian farmers of both French and British extraction. He had tried every peaceable way, and had been thoroughly squelched by the privilege holders. War was the only way he knew to get the bulk of Canada's people out from under their domination.

The British Army forces in Canada at the time were weak and thinly scattered. Sentiment in the United States was becoming aroused over Mackenzie's cause. People didn't have to be very old, in 1837, to remember the burnings, the Indian massacres and the contemptuous destruction of American homes by the British during the War of 1812. Mackenzie appeared as a liberator, fighting for the same cause and rallying behind him the same kind of people, against the same enemy, as had Washington.

Ever since the days of the Federalists, the trend of American administration had been toward liberalizing the conduct of government to keep the pledge made by the Founding Fathers in 1776. Top achievement of the liberalizers had been the wild-cat bank; but people were ashamed, and tried to forget that. They enjoyed a greater measure of personal and governmental liberty than any people in the world at that time. Naturally

they were deeply aroused at Canada's plight, and tried in many ways to help.

The history of the Patriot War is a Canadian story, but Mason was inevitably drawn into it because of the partisanship shown by the aroused liberty-loving people on his side of the border. The British secret service sent a confidential report to President Van Buren which accused Mason of openly aiding and abetting the Patriots. This was accompanied by a protest from the British Ambassador demanding to know what Van Buren was going to do about it, and asking pointedly whether the national administration was going to back him in fostering open revolt in Canada. Of course Van Buren denied the charge, but he sent Mason a copy of the British document, with a polite request for an explanation.

Mason had been sending periodic reports of the clashes across the river to the State Department, but apparently they had been buried in the files. In his letter to the President, he took opportunity to howl for help in case the war should break out of the Canadian border and spread to Michigan soil. He said he had only the ornamental Brady Guards, an untrained militia and a handful of regulars at old Fort Wayne under the command of white-whiskered General Hugh Brady himself. The Patriot War, he said, was flaming all over Canada from Montreal to Mackinac Straits. The sentiment of the people was rabidly pro-Patriot, and he was making every effort to be neutral in thought and deed.

But there had been one outbreak after another while he was in the throes of the banking crisis, most of them centering around attempts by the Patriots themselves to steal caches of muskets out of Michigan arsenals at Detroit and Dearbornville. Other Patriots had invaded Michigan from Windsor, across the river, and were inflaming sentiment by stump speeches in an effort to obtain volunteers. Some of these incidents had involved the seizure by bands of "Patriots" of American boats on the Detroit River. One of Mason's protests had drawn a contemptuous rejoinder from the British Army

colonel in command at Malden, now called Amherstburg. The colonel had written Mason that while he had a high regard for General Brady personally, he had none whatever for the authority of the United States. If the "damned vagabonds" from the United States who were helping the Patriots maintain a perilous foothold on Fighting Island in the Detroit River weren't out of there before daylight the next morning, the colonel swore he would clean them out with grape and canister from his batteries. If they retreated to the United States, he said he would pursue them there "and kill them wherever they could be found".

At this, General Brady's mustaches bristled with anger. Mason lost no time in making a simultaneous appeal to the War Department for great forces of troops, and another to the Secretary of State for diplomatic help in convincing the Canadian authorities that he was not involving the United States in the war.

He went out into the gray wind of a February dawn in 1838 to see what General Brady proposed to do about this challenge from the Canadian colonel. Brady had posted a line of guards on the ice down the middle of the river. He had set out a line of flags, a hundred feet apart, to mark the exact line of the boundary. Then he mustered all his men, including the Guards.

"Men," he roared, "you see before you clearly marked the boundary between the United States and Canada. See those flags! If a British soldier or officer bearing arms crosses inside our lines, I charge you to beat them back; to capture and kill them if necessary to protect our sovereignty. My orders to you are as heretofore: to arrest and prevent all fighting men from getting over to Fighting Island, and to capture and turn over to the United States marshal all men who shall retreat from Fighting Island to our shore. Now get out there and take your posts!"

The men, thinking it was a lark, cheered and ran to their positions. By the first light of dawn, the British regular Army lookouts spotted a body of men trying to skid a stolen cannon from the Michigan shore to the island across the ice. It was

on a raft of logs, being pulled by hand. Immediately the British troops opened fire, pouring volley after volley at the cannon party. From Fighting Island came a rattle of musketry and the bang of a few light field pieces. The party stopped, loaded the cannon and fired. The recoil blew the cannon backward almost to the Michigan shore. But the men ran after it and began dragging it forward once more.

A line of gold-braided and epauletted British regulars came out of its revetments and started toward Fighting Island, muskets and bayonets ready. Brady's line held firm. Not a man moved, except to bring his piece to his shoulder and take a fine sight. But the Patriots scampered out of the blackness of the undergrowth on Fighting Island and ran for the Michigan shore. There, Brady had a second line of infantry which caught them one by one as they came, disarmed them and turned them over to the Marshal, Conrad Ten Eyck. The redcoats, seeing this, advanced right up to the line of flags in marching order, saluted, about-faced and marched back.

Mason breathed a sigh of relief. General Brady slipped and skidded his precarious way to the island across the ice, where he found five Patriots wounded. Ordering them to be taken to the Detroit hospital, he joined Mason for breakfast and commented only that he'd be damned if he'd take a chance like that again. If he had to defend a border, "why, then, dammit, doesn't the War Department send me a couple of regiments?" Mason told him that a request was on the way, but in the meantime if the militia would help, Brady might feel free to requisition as much of it as he could use. The grizzled old man thought that would help. Accordingly, Mason mobilized the militia under an executive order dated February 12, 1838, and General Brady immediately requisitioned six companies.

Swiftly the tide of battle rose, and just as swiftly it seemed to develop its bitterest conflicts on the shores of the Detroit River. Some Canadian Patriot arms-raisers had left Buffalo, and came to Detroit through the United States along the southern shore of Lake Erie. By the time they were discovered,

the diplomats at Washington were so upset that President Van Buren found it necessary to issue a proclamation declaring the neutrality of the United States in the conflict. Mason wrote him February 11th:

"I regret to inform you that contrary to my most confident expectations this frontier is again thrown into a state of confusion by the appearance of a force recently disbanded and dispersed from Navy Island (another island in the Detroit River). I have no idea that this assemblage of persons can make an effective impression on the Canadian shore, but the fact of their appearance is calculated to keep this side of the line in a continued ferment, and the opposite shore in a constant state of alarm and apprehension."

He continued with a detailed description of the open campaigning for volunteers going on in Michigan towns. He wanted Federal authority to seize any suspicious-looking boxes or crates which might contain arms being smuggled into Canada. A day or so previously, he had been hoodwinked by a band of Patriots in Detroit itself. They had stolen twelve boxes of United States Army muskets which were being transferred from the arsenal at Dearbornville to the city jail at Detroit for the use of the militia. Brady's intelligence officer located them hidden in a loft over a "ball-alley", and no harm was done; but while the military was patting itself on the back for finding the muskets, the Patriots stole a hundred and one barrels of flour which were on the steamer *General Brady* at a Detroit dock.

Throughout Michigan the Patriots were raising a squad here and a company there. Most of these volunteers were Canadian-born or had families in Canada, but Mason issued a proclamation in which he denounced them and said that by participating in an armed rebellion they forfeited all claims to United States protection. They were meeting everywhere, in out-of-the-way cabins which were known to the Patriot sympathizers in the United States as "hunting lodges". Volunteers were passed from one point to another by these people until they could be mustered into a company on the Michigan side, then hurried

across the river into the fighting area. The Hunting Lodges Society was found to include a good many prominent Americans, and was used as window-dressing by the Canadian promoters to obtain a larger number of ordinary volunteers. The President's investigation into the society disclosed that it was operating these "lodges" throughout Ohio and New York State, and as far south as Kentucky. Michigan, however, led the list. Most of them were in and around Detroit; some were as far north as Port Huron where the narrow crossing to Sarnia was the favorite means of exit.

General Winfield Scott, from Washington, sent three companies of infantry under the command of Colonel Worth. This did not satisfy old Brady by any means. Scott replied to his urgent message by banging his old mahogany desk, uttering a few heartfelt oaths and painfully lifting his 230 pounds out of his comfortable chair. He picked up his plumed and gold-encrusted headgear and announced that he was going to have to keep America out of war personally. He departed forthwith for Detroit. In his entourage rode his aide, a young lieutenant named Robert Anderson. In 1861 it was this same man, then Major Anderson, who had the misfortune to be in command of Fort Sumter when it was fired upon and thus touched off the Civil War. In February, 1838, he was a nervous, timid sort of person who was continually fussed because of the presence in the party of a woman, Miss Emily Mason of Detroit. She had been leisurely jaunting around the country after a pleasant winter in New Orleans, and had gone to Washington just in time to hitchhike to Detroit as the General's guest.

She wrote: ". . . It was a long and bitterly cold journey by coach through Pennsylvania and Ohio. At this time Lieutenant Anderson was young and shy, and when ordered by the general to help me over the Maumee River, which we were crossing on the ice, he extended to me the tips of his fingers, much to the general's indignation, who then took me in hand and at the risk of drowning us both, for the ice cracked at every step of his enormous person."

At any rate, General Scott and Emily Mason arrived in

frozen Detroit on February 26th, and the two of them soon had the situation well in hand. Emily was eager to catch up on family gossip and to hear all about the angelic Julia Phelps, and to rush to the honeymoon cottage blissfully occupied by the Rowlands. General Scott listened to Brady's estimate of the situation, and suggested that the United States Army make itself as inconspicuous as possible. He knew that tension in Washington over the crisis was greater than at Detroit, where only the common people were calling each other names across the border. He assured General Brady that war with England was a distinct possibility, that the British embassy had taken a decidedly dim view of the assistance to the Patriot cause painfully apparent throughout Michigan.

Even as he spoke, peaceful Americans who were trying to be neutral were clapped into Canadian jails. Mason's protests were futile. Movements of troops at Windsor, Sandwich and Amherstburg were studied by United States Army officers through telescopes. They reported that it certainly looked as if the British were preparing an invasion of Michigan across the ice. More mass meetings were held in Detroit, with all sections of the city's population genuinely scared. In haste, Mason again wrote to the President in alarm over the growing tenseness, urging that Army supplies be sent to General Scott. The ponderous general was the coolest figure in the situation. He did not seem alarmed in the least, and tut-tutted Mason's demand for formidable preparations for war. His advice was to lie low.

Apparently, Scott's summary of the situation was correct. He stayed on at Detroit to watch things personally, but the combat zone in the war presently veered off toward Niagara and Michigan obtained a lull in the excitement. As spring melted the ice and brought on its receding floods the first resplendent Lake Erie steamboats of the 1838 season, Mason's anxiety over Julia and the tricky bankers of New York could be controlled no longer. It was time for him to go.

A governor, he discovered, cannot go to New York whenever he likes. The Legislature had to be consulted, and reasons

given for his absence. He said he was going to try to complete the five-million-dollar loan, and that he should go at once. Ed Mundy sided with the Legislature; there was too much to do. Mason's desk was littered with invitations from towns which wanted him to speak; others had organized opening ceremonies for the new projects and needed him to officiate. Besides, argued Ed, the Legislature was about to adjourn and Mason must make some kind of statement about the chances for floating a loan before he left.

Hurriedly Mason swept through his office routine and without too much meditation drafted a message to the Legislature about a loan. He said that the three-commissioner system had worked very well, to everyone's satisfaction, in both the Banking Department and the Internal Improvements project. He therefore moved that a board of three Commissioners be appointed to take over the entire responsibility for the five-million-dollar loan. He said he would work with it, and advise it, and would assist the members to float the actual loan in New York. But he wanted to be relieved of the responsibility for handling the money, and accounting for it.

"I am constrained by a sense of public duty," he wrote, "to call the attention of the Legislature to the importance of providing some proper agency for the management of State loans already authorized or hereafter to be authorized. At present the exclusive and unrestricted negotiation and management of loans, as well as the sale of all exchange derived from that source, is left to the discretion of the executive. . . . This is wrong in principle. It gives to one individual control of millions of the public money for which there is no corresponding check or responsibility. It will readily occur to you that the public interests demand that this important branch of our State policy, the management of the five-million-dollar loan, should receive the undivided attention of a distinct department organized for that purpose. It is impossible for the executive to bestow that attention to the subject which its importance demands. . . . I earnestly recommend the creation of a Board of Loan Commissioners. . . ."

The vote on Mason's recommendation started an oratorical free-for-all in the Legislature; the Whigs shouted that he was dodging responsibility, and the Democrats howled for some help for a badly overworked man. The argument grew so noisy that both sides forgot what they were arguing about and drifted into insults and invective. They did not pass the resolution. In consequence, Mason had to shoulder the entire responsibility for floating the bond issue, collecting the money from it and delivering it intact to the State Treasurer.

If he had enjoyed unlimited authority, such a burden of responsibility would have been accepted as a normal burden. But it became evident that the Legislature was saddling him with all the administrative and executive work he could stand; the Democrats because no one else could do it half so well, and the Whigs because they hoped he would stub his toe and come a cropper which would discredit him in the eyes of his people.

Mason was quiet and strangely repressed. He appeared at Monroe in April as the guest of honor at a banquet whereby the city expressed its gratitude for his part in saving the Southern Railroad. He went to Mt. Clemens, took off his silk-lined coat, rolled up his lace-cuff sleeves and manfully dug the first spadeful of earth for the Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal. Immediately afterward, baggage packed and letters to his associates in New York already mailed, Mason booked a berth and left for New York.

3

He stayed in New York during all of May and part of June, 1838. The deal, which he had intimated was going smoothly the preceding fall, was not going smoothly at all. In his heart Mason knew it, and realized that he was not the man to try to win concessions from New York financiers. They tied him up like a Christmas turkey ready for the oven. He was not the only state official in New York trying to float bond issues for the same kind of projects. It was a bankers' market. They

did not like state issues anyway, and their incessant stipulations and conditions almost drove Mason wild.

He was living at the original Astor House, far downtown, only a brief walk from the Washington Square district where dwelt Julia Phelps. Every day he was victimized and hoodwinked by the bankers; evening brought solace at Julia's. He had come alone and for the first two weeks of his visit he thought he was alone. Then he became conscious of someone watching him. He said clearly in his report, later, that he felt he was "spied upon". Try as he would, he could not identify anyone.

Every evening Julia sat demurely in her parlor. She had just turned twenty. She was beautiful. As she sat on the horse-hair sofa, her wide skirts spread in rippling satin waves over most of its length and her two prim little slipper toes peeping side by side from beneath the hem, Mason contemplated her as he would have the Mona Lisa. There was something inscrutable about her; mysterious, challenging. She was dark, and her brown hair flowed away from a central part to cascade down either side of her high forehead, acting as a backdrop for a small, delicate, heart-shaped face and two of the biggest and most soulful eyes in this world. She was small and dainty, as fragile as a doll. Her tightly laced waist seemed so small that Mason thought he could touch his finger tips around it, and the idea seemed to have possibilities.

Julia was a figure in New York society, and had enjoyed easy contact with the great personalities of the city since childhood. Her father was one of those millionaires who still operated his original business and ostensibly invested money as a sideline. His leather and hides business was unimportant now, although very lucrative. He was doing a private banking business; joining pools with other wealthy men to underwrite bond issues and speculate on anything that looked attractive. This interesting occupation brought to the Phelps home frequent guests as wealthy as himself. They, and their sons, had been courting the fair Julia for some time.

Mason, while obviously not wealthy, fascinated Julia. He

was a hero right out of a book; a dashing, handsome, adventurous character with the excitement of a frontier life and the charm of an old Virginia family. In his courtship he played strictly in character. He swept her off her feet. He overwhelmed her. He made up his mind to marry her as soon as he saw her, and told her so. This occurred in November, 1837, and he had to return to Detroit immediately. There was no time for the niceties of convention then. Throughout the winter he wrote to Julia constantly. He had plenty of time to consider the matter carefully, and so did she. He had time to analyze it with the calm detachment which matrimony requires, except when one's beloved is in the same room, posed primly on a horsehair sofa, gazing up out of a pair of round, questioning eyes. . . .

He must have asked her to marry him the moment he came into her house, that first evening in April, 1838. She cast down her eyes and nodded her head. We know she did, because Mason jubilantly wrote friends in Detroit all about it. Soon, anyone in Detroit who could read a newspaper knew about it. There were little liners to the effect that . . . "our handsome Governor is about to become a benedict", and speculating on how Julia would like Detroit. The couple had probably not even considered subjects like that, as yet. Julia said she would have to have time; she would not be rushed off in any whirlwind elopement or anything so callous. Papa's position decreed that she must be a bride, with a church wedding, and a reception at the Astor House afterward. "In the fall," she said.

Deliriously happy, Mason now found that he had plenty of energy to attack the problem of the five-million-dollar loan. Nothing could stop him. He went about New York in the coma which all lovers suffer from when they realize that they are now committed to matrimony and already approaching the golden day. It was a most unfortunate frame of mind for a man making the rounds of New York brokers trying to float a loan. He had difficulty in focussing his mind on what they were saying. He thought the credit of a state was synonymous with that of the Federal government itself. He fancied all he

had to do was name the amount he wanted, and point out where they were to sign.

After his first week of tramping from broker to broker, the loan was still unplaced and no one would give him any assurances that they would handle it. He came back to earth with a thump. This unpleasant incident occurred in the office of John Delafield, an independent broker who had been handling some banking business for Michigan in New York previously. It had been Delafield who had promised Mason the preceding fall that if a slight change were made in the law authorizing the loan, he and his partners would handle it. Mason, his mind on Julia, had heard only the last part of the sentence. He had nodded and said it would be attended to, and had returned home to announce that the loan was all but completed.

It now appeared, to Mason's horror, that Delafield had lost interest in it and had decided to withdraw. He had been corresponding with capitalists in Europe in an effort to organize a syndicate which would handle the loan and bond issue. But no part of the loan had been placed, even after Michigan had changed the Act so that interest and principal were made payable in Europe as well as in New York. Now, Delafield demanded that the law be changed again, to raise the interest rate from five and a half to six percent. Even then he didn't know what could be done about it.

This squelched Mason. A one-half percent rise in the interest rate would change the carrying charges in Michigan by a very large sum. But Delafield said that all other states and municipalities were offering six percent and having hard sledding to raise money at that high rate. Mason wrote hurriedly to Ed Mundy; the Legislature was notified of the crisis and without debate amended the Act to authorize six percent. It further declared that both interest and principal might be payable anywhere in the world, at the existing rate of \$4.44 to the pound sterling. Mason received news of this cooperative gesture while he was still in New York, and at once hurried back to Mr. Delafield's office.

Apparently satisfied, the broker said he would turn it over to his associate, James King, who was about to leave for Europe on other matters. Mr. King was a partner in the big banking house of Prime, Ward and King, which made it sound very impressive to Mason. He said he would advance Michigan \$150,000 as a gamble against the success of Mr. King's venture. But a day or so later he said he had changed his mind and wanted to withdraw entirely. He claimed that the Michigan Legislature had no business fixing the relation of the dollar to the pound sterling at \$4.44; by the time the principal became due it might be higher or lower, and no banker in Europe would want to be tied down to such a stipulation.

With a heavy heart and dragging feet, Mason shut the door of Delafield's office behind him. He saw a vision of himself, the Governor of Michigan, on a soapbox in Battery Park peddling bonds to passers-by. He didn't know any other way of selling them. In despair he began making the rounds again, office to office. Somebody put him in touch with a Mr. Edward R. Biddle of Philadelphia. Mr. Biddle, a former director of the United States Bank and immensely wealthy, came to New York to see him. After hearing Mason's story, he said it might be arranged. He would take the whole load from around Mason's neck for a commission of \$80,000. It seemed to Mason that this time the deal would go through. But before he could consult the Legislature to learn whether it would authorize such a commission, Mr. Biddle notified him that he could not go on with it.

In the meantime, work in Michigan stopped. In Ann Arbor, the construction crews on the Michigan Central were stricken with cholera and the job was halted. They were all sick and had not been paid for two months. In Monroe, surveys on the Southern Railroad were abandoned entirely, because no funds remained in the Treasury to go on with it. Village merchants were sending delegations to Detroit, demanding from the Legislature some word of a date when the paralyzed banks would reopen. Money from the sale of those bonds became

so vital that Mason worked like a madman. But Mr. Biddle, his last hope, had definitely turned him down.

Eventually, in Mason's darkest hour, Mr. Biddle had an idea. He said he was on a number of boards, and so forth, and among other titles he was president of the Morris Canal and Banking Company, the firm which built the mountain-climbing canal which wound through the New Jersey hills. The canal was a very profitable one, and it operated a bank in connection with its activities. Perhaps this bank could help Mason out of his dilemma.

Like a man reprieved from the gallows, Mason marched into the meeting of the directors of the Morris Canal and Banking Company. With Mr. Biddle on the board sat Washington Irving. Mason's spirits rose. The assemblage glittered with names synonymous with great wealth. Their company, too, was an industrial octopus of 1838. It owned warehouses, mills, docks, fleets of ships, farms, mines and Newark property. Their stock had been selling at fifty percent premium until the Panic of 1837, but was still quoted above par. They had money—millions of dollars. They had underwritten the same kind of bond issue for Indiana, and were doing very well with it.

To these men Mason made one of the most successful speeches of his career. They agreed to take the loan, and told Mason to forget about Prime, Ward and King. Negotiations were swift and pleasant. Mason was in a daze. Under date of June 1, 1838, a contract was prepared between the Morris Canal and Banking Company, hereinafter called Party of the First Part, and the State of Michigan, Stevens T. Mason, Governor, etc., etc., which Mason unfortunately didn't read, didn't submit to his Attorney General, and signed where he was told for fear this deal, too, would collapse.

"That the Company is to become the agent of the State for the sale of the whole issue . . . principal and interest payable in New York, to which city the Company is to guarantee to safe delivery of funds secured through the sale of bonds or elsewhere. Paragraph 8. The Company guarantees to the State

that it shall receive the par value of the aggregate amount of bonds sold, that is, if in the sale of said bonds the Company is obliged to dispose of them at less than stated par value, the Company is obliged to reimburse the State for the difference between received and par value. Paragraph 9. The Sum of \$1,300,000 in bonds of the State of Michigan is to be delivered to the Company upon execution of this contract; the Company advancing to the State the sum of \$250,000 in cash at the same time. The sum of \$1,050,000 is to be credited to the State, to be drawn upon demand by its duly authorized Governor or Treasurer. The remainder of the amount is to be paid in quarterly installments, beginning with the first day of July, 1839, and continuing until the entire amount is paid."

Mason almost whooped with joy when he saw that the contract would guarantee that the State received par for every bond. The installments would be paid to the State on time whether the Company sold them or not, thus guaranteeing steady employment in Michigan on the Internal Improvements project. Further, the Company retained the right to buy up the remainder of the issue at any time and take delivery of all the bonds, upon written notice of thirty days to the Governor.

"In the event of sales at more than par value, the contracting parties are to divide equally all premiums up to and including five percent. For the execution of the contract, the Company is to receive a commission of two and a half percent on the proceed of sales, which is to be in lieu of all other expenses...."

Yes, cried Mason. Yes! Yes! All he wanted to know was where to sign. He thought he had his good friend Washington Irving to thank for this bit of corporate generosity, but he didn't stop to inquire. The money situation in Michigan was such that he must get home at once, with all haste. He wanted to leave by June 8th, and take the first payment on the bonds with him. Accordingly the deal was hurried up a bit so that he could take with him about \$100,000 in cash, which turned out to be bank notes issued by the Morris Canal and Banking Com-

pany. The contract was amended to provide for an immediate payment of \$250,000, due August 1, 1838, and \$100,000 each month thereafter. Mason signed this new contract with one eye on the cashier's cage, where a gentleman was busily counting out crisp new \$100 notes. He signed for a first payment of \$110,397.70, which was made up at the Company's New York bank, and delivered to him in a package containing a pile of carefully marked stacks of bank notes.

When Mason returned to the Astor House he found awaiting him in the lobby a Detroit resident named Theodore Romeyn, a lawyer. Mason knew him; he knew Romeyn had been the promoter and chief scalawag of several of the most vicious wildcat banks in the State. A Whig, a furtive character with a darting glance that never looked into anyone's eyes, Romeyn was the last man on earth Mason wanted to see. The lawyer wanted to know how the big deal was coming. Then Mason knew. This explained the invisible presence of some watcher, which had haunted Mason throughout his visit.

The Governor replied stiffly that the deal was completed, and that he was leaving for Detroit at once with a little over a hundred thousand dollars. At this, Romeyn's eyes popped and he clutched Mason's arm.

"You can't carry a sum like that to Detroit safely," he said. "Why, the New York papers are full of this deal. The Bank will release a story on it even if you don't. No, sir. Your life's in danger. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. . . ."

The Romeyn plan was simple. He had just happened, he said, to have spent a few days in New York on business, and was about to return to Detroit himself. They could go together. They'd get a trunk, a small trunk, and put some of Romeyn's clothes in it and mark it with Romeyn's name. Then nobody would suspect. The money, and Mason's life, would be safe.

Mason's first impulse was to punch Romeyn in the nose. He came inside the lobby, sat down, lighted a thin Virginia cigar and meditated. The packet of money he gave to the bookkeeper to put in the hotel safe until his departure. He knew he had almost a thousand miles of rough travel; the mere name of

Governor Mason and the presence of that packet would be enough to get his throat cut somewhere along the route.

He did not like Romeyn, but he did not like highwaymen, either. It was true that the deal had been given some New York publicity. It was equally true that robbery anywhere along the route was such a commonplace occurrence that no one was ever surprised that the crime occurred or that few were ever apprehended.

On second thought he decided to let Romeyn carry the money, and then to watch Romeyn. Accordingly, the trunk was purchased and packed as Romeyn directed. His name was hammered on it in brass-headed nails. Now let us hear in the Governor's own words what happened:

"On the morning after receiving the trunk, I left New York on the six o'clock boat. The trunk was not out of my sight for more than ten minutes, and then under the lock of my room until it was placed aboard the Albany boat. When on the boat I requested Mr. Romeyn to have it placed in the captain's office, he having his name attached to the trunk. My reason for identifying the trunk with Mr. Romeyn, as well as my reason for requesting him to purchase it, was that it was generally known that I was negotiating a loan in New York and I might be followed for the purpose of stealing it on the road home.

"At Albany the trunk was kept in my hotel room, and when I was out I had the key of the room in my possession. In Albany one evening, I left for Utica the next day and it was under the lock of the baggage car (of the railroad train). From Utica to Syracuse it was on the front seat of the stagecoach under the driver's seat. We left Utica about four o'clock in the afternoon and reached Syracuse about one or two in the morning. At Syracuse it was not out of my keeping. From Syracuse to Oswego it was on the deck of the canal-boat for about half a day. At Oswego for one afternoon it was under lock in my room. From Oswego to Niagara it was in the office of the captain of the canal-boat for one night. From Niagara to Buffalo it was on top of the railroad car, and I rode on the

outside in the night with it. At Buffalo it remained in my room under lock.

"On Lake Erie it was placed in the captain's office and delivered to me at Detroit. When I arrived at my home I took from the trunk the articles be longing to Mr. Romeyn and myself, and delivered it to the Treasurer. At no time on the journey was it opened by me, nor could I at any time observe that the overcoat on the top had been moved. On opening the trunk at home, everything seemed to be as I had placed them. The package of ten thousand, three hundred and ninety-seven dollars was on top, as I had placed it, and was immediately delivered to the Treasurer as part of the cash payment, counted by him, and found to be correct."

But the amount was not correct; the cashier at the Michigan State Bank counted the whole amount and found that from various marked stacks of fives, tens and twenties, the sum of \$4,630 had been taken. Suspicion immediately pointed to Mason. He awoke to the realization that he had not counted the payment at New York. Alarmed, he wrote the Morris Canal and Banking Company asking them to recheck their records and certify that the money was correct at the time the payment was delivered to him. The cashier at the Michigan State Bank, a loyal Whig, immediately notified the editor of the *Detroit Advertiser*. Romeyn was nowhere to be found. Various friends asked Mason to make a statement about it, whether he was going to accuse Romeyn of taking the money. Mason had strong suspicions but no proof. As word of the incident spread, Mason found himself under direct accusation by the same section of violent Whigs who had been baiting him in the Legislature. Mason was so infuriated that it was with difficulty that his friends avoided a regrettable brawl.

One day he received a letter from the Morris Canal and Banking Company enclosing \$4,580 in the same bills Mason had been carrying. Some anonymous person, they said, had mailed it in, from a New York post office. The missing \$50 was quickly made good by Mason himself, and the incident officially closed. Politically it was never closed. Suspicion clung to him.

Romeyn continued to be missing. Mason couldn't find where he had gone. For fifty years, says Lawton Hemans, this baffling mystery hung to Mason's name and defied explanation.

Emboldened by an excuse to attack him, the Whigs now came out into the open and began assaulting every phase of the five-million-dollar-loan deal. They accused Mason of swindling the State out of a fortune by getting involved with the Morris Canal and Banking Company. Woodbridge, in the State Senate, cried that it was no better than a wildcat bank; what were its notes worth in Michigan? More paper, more depreciation, Woodbridge declaimed. And Michigan had paid a whopping commission for the privilege of discounting them. The law said the bonds must be sold at par; the contract admitted that they would be guaranteed to the State at par, but what was this? A provision for a two-and-a-half-percent commission. That meant that the State realized a net of ninety-seven and a half per cent. Illegal! A swindle!

Woodbridge's long-awaited day had come. The Whigs rallied behind him. They went over the contract with a fine-tooth comb, and the career of Stevens Thomson Mason in Michigan began to crumble when they drove wedges into its most obvious cracks; his pitiful lack of experience in finance.

Numbly, Mason didn't care. He was sick of it; weary to death of this continual sniping at him. He had done his job; he had negotiated the loan on the best terms he could get; he had pleaded for help and received only mocking laughter from the Legislature. Suddenly, defiantly, Mason packed up again and left for New York. He wanted Julia.

They were married at Thaddeus Phelps' home on November 1, 1838. Mason was four days past his twenty-seventh birthday. Emily Mason and the aged Mrs. Elizabeth Moir Mason wept, as they saw the fine young man embrace Julia and bestow the nuptial kiss. Her life with him was a constant fight against the relentless elements which were pulling her husband to pieces before her eyes. Paradoxical as were most of the big moments in Mason's life, his marriage was the beginning of his downfall.

CHAPTER XII

MASON CHOOSES NOT TO RUN

I

THE FASHIONS of 1838 gave dainty Julia Phelps Mason an unfortunate beginning to her married life. It was considered indelicate to be healthy. Ladies swooned at many dilemmas. A sigh and a collapse into someone's arms appear to have been the standard answer to any difficult situation. This seems slightly silly. Today it requires some concentration to treat of the early Victorian lady with the requisite dignity. In Detroit the daughters of the Witherells, the Palmers and the Trowbridges, who had been helping the daughters of the Campeaus, the Casses and the Dequindres fight the terrible cholera epidemics four years before, now developed fashionable paleness and hair-trigger fainting attacks, like victims of the last stages of consumption.

Emily Mason pooh-poohed all this feminine delicacy and refused to be cowed by it. She went trouping around the United States as gaily as ever, without any nurse to hand her the smelling salts every time she encountered a deck hand blithely relieving himself against a dock piling. Emily never fainted and never had a serious illness of which there is a record. She was regarded as a bit too independent for the period, however, and continued to live as a maiden lady. It was Julia's type which collected suitors.

England as well as America appeared to be in the midst of this ardently romantic interlude. The death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832, and of Byron eight years earlier, had given the elaborate verbal scrollwork of those popular penmen a popularity which affected the whole social history of the times. Scott's heroines were invariably small, dainty and delicate, so much so that they had to repel the boorish advances of wealthy

but baseborn suitors with twelve-syllable words which made the cads slink away in confusion. They swooned; they had the pallor and paleness of a chronic invalid; and therefore girls like Julia Phelps Mason, who was naturally weak, became fashionable. She had huge, expressive eyes, a tired smile and a genius for conveying an impression that she was about to have a relapse.

Her husband fetched and carried for her during their brief honeymoon, which they spent right in New York. He waited on her as if she were, in fact, an invalid. This was just what Julia loved. They were completely happy.

Letters came to furrow the Mason brow. He never mentioned them to Julia, because in 1838 a woman was not supposed to know anything about statecraft. Emily did. In brief interludes during the honeymoon Mason and his sister spent long hours talking about what remedy he could apply to the sinister situation in Detroit, growing worse by the hour.

Mason did not tell Julia that he stayed around Detroit during most of the summer of 1838 because his official neck was in a noose and he was fighting for his political life. He spared her the details of the rising tide of Whig sentiment against him which had threatened to engulf him almost every day, and which was aimed at knocking him out of public life. He had an easy way out. He could make a graceful exit on the line that he had served two terms and that it was contrary to national precedent to serve a third. He decided not to become a candidate for re-election.

This was probably the only fact which kept Stevens Thomson Mason, Michigan's first Governor, from being impeached. Woodbridge's day was now dawning. He was going after Mason with a violence that was almost savage.

Bit by bit, Mason had attempted to remedy the ills that Woodbridge was arousing the Legislature to investigate. Further risk of robbery in transit from New York to Detroit was eliminated by installing John Norton, Jr., cashier of the Michigan State Bank, in New York to receive the cash payments on the loan. Woodbridge's lamentations in the Legislature about

the illegal contract with the Morris Canal and Banking Company were answered by the Governor in detail. He said the contract was not illegal, and it was so held by a Supreme Court opinion. But it was unfortunate. The contract was indeed as full of loopholes as an old stockaded fort, and fully as vulnerable. When Whig lawyers began tearing it to bits, they found that the Morris Canal and Banking Company was receiving \$125,000 from the State as a brokerage fee. Furthermore, the State was dependent on the market for the value of the bank's bills. They might drop suddenly in New York, and be almost worthless in Michigan. Yet Michigan was obliged to repay the loan, dollar for dollar, plus interest, in legal tender, which would mean absolute par.

There was nothing much Mason could do about the contract. It was signed; the bank had Michigan's bonds and Michigan had the bank's money. The bank's directors rubbed their hands over their \$125,000 fee. They were not anxious to go through the money markets in an attempt to sell the bonds at a premium; there was no reason why they should thus exert themselves. While Mason was still ecstatically clasping his bride in his arms in the bridal suite, Chairman Edward Biddle of the bank sent him a gloomy letter about it. The bank, he said, was receiving bad news about the chances for the sale of the bonds in Europe, and so forth. The United States Bank, now a private institution in Philadelphia, was said to be loaded up with other state and municipal bonds and could not buy any more. Therefore he thought they'd better let it go, and said that the bank would take all the rest of Michigan's bonds and pass them to the State's credit at par—less, of course, the two-and-a-half-percent commission. Mason came down out of the clouds long enough to reply.

"It is with regret that I perceive that the state of the European market is such as to render the sale of Michigan bonds a matter of hazard and doubt. My expectation under the contract with your institution was to realize at least par for the bonds, and it is with extreme disappointment that I have presented to me the probability of losing two and a half percent . . . but

as the negotiation of this loan has been a most thankless and perplexing undertaking on my part, I feel unwilling to advise you."

Mr. Biddle replied that the sale of the remaining bonds had been put through and the balance due the State credited to it on the books. He congratulated Mason on the advantageous deal he had made for the people of Michigan. Mason should have framed this letter and taken it back to Michigan with him. Mr. Biddle was apparently the only person who thought the deal was any good. Sentiment in Michigan was mostly to the effect that the State had been well fleeced, and that Mason had been unable or unwilling to fight through a deal which would have saved that fee.

Woodbridge, of course, began hinting as early as the first of December, 1838, that Mason had profited by some kind of fee-splitting deal when the contract was signed. Friends in Detroit wrote the Governor to get back at once, honeymoon or no honeymoon. They urged him to the greatest haste. They said Woodbridge was demanding his investigation, and had hand-picked quite a board from among the most violent Whigs in each House.

Upon reading this, Mason groaned. There was nothing else he could do. With a sinking heart he began packing his and Julia's baggage and booking passage for a journey home. He had a final conference with Emily, who had decided not to return to Detroit. Now that her brother was married, and their mother an invalid under Emily's care in New York, there was no point in going back. She felt more than a little apprehensive about the treatment Mason would receive upon his return home. It was as plain as the long, granite-like chin on her face that a reaction had set in because of the disappointments over the loan. The very people who had cheered him for so many years were gathering rocks to hurl at him now. Intuitively Emily realized that he had suddenly lost his popularity. She urged him to finish out the rest of his term and then return to New York permanently, to practice law. In her diary she relates how she had made up his mind for him, ex-

plaining that his marriage "paved the way for his removal to New York, where he had but to enter the road to wealth and fame". She recalled how the whole family had hurried to New York from all sorts of distant points to be present at the wedding, and adored Julia immediately. "She was a beautiful and fascinating woman," Emily admits, "with whom we kept up the most affectionate relations as long as she lived."

And so the bridal couple set out, in bleak December, to begin a ten-day stagecoach journey, partly by rail, across the frozen wastes of New York State and the Province of Ontario. Mason's spirits were as cold as Julia's feet. He must be pardoned if he did not show any of the warmth usually associated with young couples who have been married only a month. He probably felt like a man being brought back in handcuffs to face trial.

Julia was twenty years old, and pregnant. This was a rather brutal introduction to married life, but she bore up under it as well as she could. Neither she nor her husband ever dwelt on paper about her feelings during that jolting journey, nor of her opinions about the little narrow house on Jefferson, across from the old Williams mansion, in which he presently installed her. He set out across town to his office, wondering what sort of reception he would receive.

It required only a few startled words from Ed Mundy and his associates in the Legislature to confirm his worst fears. He was in for it; he was about to be investigated. While Mason had been oblivious to goings-on in Detroit, Mundy and the others had been trying to develop a defense against the worst attack of any they had seen up to that time. They advised Mason to let go the first volley in his annual message to the Legislature, due within a few days. Sentiment in both Houses was pretty fluid so far, and they had at least an even chance of appointing a majority of Democrats to the investigating committee. They thought that if Mason would acknowledge the furore over the disappointing contract, and submit to an investigation voluntarily, his bravery would win him a friendly board.

Mason thereupon sat down to draft his message. He devoted almost the whole of it to a detailed history of the loan; he recounted all the details of the various turndowns he had received from New York brokers, and said that the Morris Canal and Banking Company offered the only way out. The deal, he said, was a disappointment to him, too, but probably no one else could have done any better. This message has been the subject of very careful study by historians of Michigan, who agree that it reveals a very strong note of pessimism and disappointment in Mason's mind, as if he were politely telling his enemies to do their worst and be damned. He surely had a clear conscience, and just as surely was not going to defend anything he had done. Let the record speak for itself. By all means launch the investigation; he would co-operate with the board to his utmost.

"I demand for my own conduct the most rigid inquiry. . . . Let the Committee investigate all such matters as present an unfavorable aspect. . . ."

Almost as soon as Mason had finished speaking from the rostrum, the wily Woodbridge was busy. He called his whips in both Houses into immediate session, and cracked his own whip over them unmercifully. He wanted a majority on that board in both Houses, or else. Mason left matters to the Democratic majority leaders, which was a grave blunder. Woodbridge had his way. The joint resolution of the Legislature demanded a committee of seven members of the House and seven from the Senate. The Whigs managed to pack it outrageously. In the Senate there were four Democrats to three Whigs. In the House there were two Democrats to five Whigs. Thus armed with an eight-to-six majority, the Whigs gleefully named to the board the very persons who could be depended upon to go to the absolute limit in persecuting him. Woodbridge himself was named to the committee, and so was James Wright Gordon, the source of the resolution against Mason the preceding summer. Chairman of the whole joint committee was Daniel S. Bacon, the man who had been defeated by Ed Mundy

for the lieutenant-governorship on the Whig ticket the year before.

It started out as an overture to political murder. Mason flung himself into midnight political sessions with his adherents, and by strict insistence on the business at hand he steered the Whigs away from irrelevant political and personal generalities. Confined solely to the matter of Mason's guilt or innocence, they disappointed the Whigs by clearing him.

"Your committee does not inquire if the compensation stipulated to be paid to the Morris Canal and Banking Company was exorbitant, nor whether the sale of bonds could have been made on more advantageous terms. They refer to the Act of the Legislature (authorizing the loan) as their only rule of action." Thus, was the act of Governor Mason in submitting to a deduction of two and a half percent legal, or illegal? It was legal. They inquired into the mysterious theft from the first installment of notes carried by the Governor himself. They said they had accumulated a ream of testimony, and had gone all around Robin Hood's barn, or words to that effect, but could find no one responsible. "It sleeps in the bosom of him who perpetrated the crime. It is due to Governor Mason and the public to say that no imputation whatever rests upon him."

Woodbridge wrote that. What was in his mind? Was he trying to build up a reputation for impartiality to cloak some slashing future attack? No one knew. Woodbridge summoned Romeyn in an instant, although Mason never could find him. Romeyn had appeared before the committee. He denied taking any of the missing money, or appropriating any of it to his own uses, and exonerated Mason in the most specific language. He said: "I have never directly or indirectly drawn any money from the State for my own purposes; neither have I received from Governor Mason any accommodation or advances." This statement was made a matter of record and appears in the committee's report. Then Theodore Romeyn disappeared again for two years, and reappeared just as suddenly to change

his story entirely. In 1841 he was summoned again, and in response to Woodbridge's whistle he produced a story that was like a bomb. Mason never did succeed in finding him.

However, Mason accepted the report with relief and prepared to let the whole thing die a natural death. He turned his attention once more to his bride. He was aware now that Julia was in what the Victorians called "an interesting condition", and that pretty soon the cruelly tight bodices of the 1839 costumes, with their flaring hoop skirts, would reveal it. Julia didn't like Detroit and was tearfully afraid of the ruthless Whigs. She thought they would plot to knife her husband some dark night. She felt in physical danger every hour she stayed there.

Mason, too, began to see Detroit in a new light. What had happened? Where was the triumphant party spirit that had carried Mason and his Democrats to victory in contest after contest? What was the meaning of this quarrelling and back-biting between old party friends? What disaster had produced the hollow feeling of impending trouble that had changed all these once-sunny faces to hangdog, evasive grimaces?

For nearly eight years, Stevens T. Mason had lived in a glare of publicity. He had learned not to depend upon the cheers and plaudits of a crowd to guide him, and had painfully acquired a certain judgment of popular trends from the reactions that followed his impulsive acts. It was said of him that "he had learned something of the insincerity of the praise that sometimes follows success, and the injustice of the blame that sometimes follows failure." Now, however, in January, 1839, he was wholly at a loss. Something had happened that he could not understand. On the surface, it seemed to him that the fight over the five-million-dollar-loan contract had fizzled out when the committee found no parliamentary tree on which to hang him, and that it would be forgotten. But it was not being forgotten. The bitter feeling against him was there, growing strong enough for him to sense it every day in the atmosphere of the capitol corridors. He was constantly on the defensive.

The party was breaking up before his eyes. The machine that he had built long years before, even prior to the "Toledo War", had carried its last election. In Congress, Senator Norvell was not on speaking terms with Senator Lucius Lyon, and Congressman Crary was in the doghouse with his constituents. They thought that Crary had gone "politician" in Washington, and was being seen with too many rich lobbyists and influential vote buyers. When he came up for re-election in the summer of 1838, he just squeaked through with a majority of 204 out of more than 10,000 votes cast. In this same election the Whigs had picked up more seats in the Detroit city council and had a powerful majority there, but not in the Legislature. They were happy, confident and forever threatening Mason.

The Boy Governor was slipping badly. Out in the rural districts there was another spasm of bitter poverty, for which he was blamed. The unpromising future of the Internal Improvements project had stopped work on everything except the Central Railroad, which at this time was past Ann Arbor and approaching Dexter. Money could not be had; credit was tight; loans were being called, and mortgages foreclosed. All this, in the people's eyes, was caused by Mason's failure to carry out his lavish promises of State construction projects and a sound currency backed by a State Bank.

He was a thoroughly discredited Governor at the head of a cracked and disintegrating administration. Such a realization comes eventually to the head of almost every political organization dependent upon public support for existence. Some charge headlong at it like a ram butting into a brick wall, and get their brains knocked out. Others, gifted with some degree of foresight, accept the inevitable and make plans for life as plain citizens. Fortunately, Mason had perception enough to realize that he had had his whole cycle and was now facing the concluding phase of his public career.

If they would let him alone, he would bow out gracefully. If Woodbridge or any other vengeful Whig didn't try to hoist himself into Mason's chair over his bleeding and pros-

trate body, Mason would even make it easy for him. The tone of the investigating committee's report had indicated that the Whigs intended to campaign on straight election lines without lambasting Mason personally. Mason felt relieved at this.

Yet, in his heart, he knew this dream would never come true. It was impossible for these Whigs to campaign for any office at all without raising a stink, calling grand juries, smearing somebody's carefully nourished public reputation all over the pages of their indescribable campaign sheets. The temper of the times was never nastier than in the spring of 1839. Mason felt strongly that the Whigs, and Woodbridge personally, were going to crucify him.

As soon as possible after delivering his annual message, Mason sent the Legislature a politely phrased paragraph announcing that he was not to be considered a candidate for reelection in 1839. He hoped that this definite statement would turn the Whigs' attention from him and focus it upon any Democrat luckless enough to be nominated at the party convention to succeed him. Whatever happened, Mason knew that he would not humor Julia and take her back to New York until after the spring session of the Legislature, which usually lasted only a few weeks.

Perversely, this session lasted well past its allotted time and ran into months. It seemed to Mason that every little detail of the State's administration became the subject of loud-voiced harangues in the Legislature. Lucius Lyon's term as Senator expired on March 4, 1839, and the fight which presently broke out in both Houses set an all-time high for malevolent personal name calling. Neither party could agree on anyone. Even the members of the joint committee, appointed to nominate a candidate, wrangled and scolded each other. Some Whigs tried to take advantage of the confusion by attempting to slip through a bill which would have allowed some of their scheming real-estate men to buy up the State's precious school and University lands for the standard dollar and a quarter per acre. Mason promptly vetoed it and sent it back with a stinging note.

The Legislature hung about, belligerently, until April 20th, and became the longest session in the State's experience until that time. The final day's session continued almost all night and well into Sunday morning, the 21st, with the members making so much noise that the *Michigan Observer* complained that their conduct was "unbecoming statesmen". They never acted less like statesmen than during this session. When they finally gave up, and went home, Mason hurriedly booked passage on a Buffalo boat for himself and Julia.

2

Twenty-two days later, Mason was back at his desk at Detroit. He had taken Julia home to her father's house with many soothing assurances that he would come back again for a week or two during the summer, but that he couldn't spare time now. He had to tell her, quietly, that she'd be better off with her family while the slanderous attacks on him were building up during the coming campaign. He would be embarrassed to have her in Michigan while the Whig party convention was in progress and the name of Mason was being plastered with Whig epithets and political mud. Julia seemed quite content. She said she would be all right with mama and papa to take care of her. It was with great relief that Mason started homeward.

He didn't have much time in Detroit to worry about the Whigs' plans for his political ouster. He had arrived back in May, and about the middle of June letters started coming from Julia. She was completing her preparations, and had the baby's crib all decorated with satin ribbons. The time was drawing close. In July, Mason left Detroit again, in the midst of political meetings and a heavy burden of State work. The selection of delegates to the party's convention was in progress, but nothing happening in Michigan could hold a candle in importance to what was happening in New York. He arrived in New York exactly on time.

Mason's mother was spending the summer with him in Detroit, and she kept the house open while he was gone. She

remained quietly indoors, and it was to her on August 3, 1839, that Mason wrote jubilantly that the baby had arrived on August 1st, exactly nine months to the day after the wedding. It was a boy—a nice, healthy boy with blue eyes. Happily he wrote that it was Julia's wish to christen the baby Stevens Thomson Mason, Jr. He would be the first boy of the fourth generation to bear the honored name. Julia was well but weak, he wrote, and as soon as everything was all right he expected to return to Detroit. He was practically a commuter between New York and Detroit, an average of ten days each way. He had the same time problem that a man of the present generation would have if he went dashing back and forth between Detroit and Manila. He seems to have spent as much time travelling as he did at his desk.

His plans were too vague to enable him to make any long-range commitments. He acted quickly, as circumstances dictated. When the baby was a couple of weeks old, he felt he could not postpone the unpleasantness any longer. The conventions were meeting, and he might as well go back and get it over with.

When he arrived, the Democrats were in the midst of their sessions. They were meeting at Ann Arbor as usual, and had chosen Elon Farnsworth as candidate for Governor; Thomas Fitzgerald for Lieutenant Governor, and a long list of newcomers for the other elective positions. They had dropped their feuds and were trying to present a united front against the Whig machine. By selecting Mr. Farnsworth they had gone as far to the right as Democrats could. He was a conservative, successful Detroit attorney who had been a Supreme Court justice and had served for a time as one of Mason's Banking Examiners. He had had a long career as a banker in Detroit.

The ticket was as strong as the party could make it. They avoided any reference to Mason in their resolutions. They did not follow the custom of giving the outgoing Governor a vote of thanks, nor did they refer to his administration in any way.

The slight, if it was intended as such, must have made Mason squirm inwardly, but he never alluded to it.

The Whigs travelled halfway across the State to Marshall, where there was plenty of elbowroom and open air to throw the voice. Mason was kept informed as to what they were saying about him. Most of their biting comments could be read in the *Detroit Advertiser*. They began their convention with a blast at the Democrats for having hyphenated their name a few seasons previously when they had picked up a small independent group of voters calling themselves "Republicans". The party was known as the "Democrat-Republican" party on the ballots, which infuriated the Whigs. They were hoping to get away from the title entirely and adopt the name "Republican" as their own. The resolution declared: "We will not, directly or indirectly, acquiesce in the assumption by our opponents of a name as dear to us as it is inapplicable to them."

This seemed mild enough. So did their nominating-committee report, which gave the convention its choice of half a dozen candidates. In Detroit, Mason had just begun to breathe again when he was figuratively knocked flat by news from Marshall. Woodbridge had stepped in and collared the nomination, insisting that it be made unanimous and that James Wright Gordon be acclaimed as his running-mate for Lieutenant Governor. The Whigs obediently passed the necessary resolutions. Woodbridge did not mention Mason's name, but the quick action he received from the Whigs was due partly to his comment that he was going to campaign entirely on the issue of the administration's failures and its record of "accumulated disasters".

In the Whig party convention, resolutions attacking Mason were wildly applauded and cheered. After adjournment, delegates rode back to their home towns confident of a smashing victory. It seemed to be a Whig year. Everything they did won results, and new voters. No matter how energetically the Democrats tried, they seemed to encounter a wall of public indifference. Mason could see before the campaign had been

under way a week that the Whigs had everything their own way.

They began their village campaigning by calling Mason a traitor and a curse; he was a "Benedict Arnold"; Fitzgerald was hailed as the "nurse of the wildcats". The Democrats pointed a pitiless finger at old Woodbridge. He became "that blue-light Connecticut federalist; that filcher from the public Treasury; a tyrant judge; an office-seeker in his dotage."

Woodbridge called his speakers together and told them this was old stuff. They'd have to do better than that. Calling names no longer was the best way to get votes. It was customary during a Michigan election, and about every possible epithet had already been applied. What he wanted was a short, catchy phrase that could be painted on signs and carried on banners in parades. The Whig brain trust came up with the slogan: "Woodbridge, Gordon and Reform." The Whigs decorated every county seat in the State with it. Whig meetings turned into shouting, singing demonstrations. Democrats spoke to empty courthouse squares.

The Michigan Democrats were sharing the blame for bankrupt conditions throughout the country. In 1839, Michigan, along with most other States, was in about the same condition as the United States was to be in in 1933. The Federal government lacked, however, the resources and resourcefulness of later Democrats in inaugurating a long series of alphabetical agencies which transferred great chunks of the impoverished public to the Federal payrolls, and consequent bonded loyalty at the polls. Martin Van Buren had no WPA, PWA, NRA, CCC, NYA, ERA or Federal Writers' Project. Hence, in Michigan, Mason was branded as the successor to Benedict Arnold instead of being hailed as Governor Frank Murphy was, as a sainted Sir Galahad rescuing Michigan from poverty.

It was a day when people still looked to the wisdom of their leaders in Washington to enact wise and just laws which would speed the return of prosperity. They still believed that good times could be legislated into being. It was the aftermath of a decade of wild speculation, unrestricted industrial piracy, and

overconfidence. When the bubble burst with the "Specie Circular", paper fortunes dwindled and swiftly vanished. Ambitious undertakings like railroads and canals, which would have acted somewhat like relief agencies to the harassed poor, were halted.

No clever sloganeer was needed by the Whigs to find the chinks in the Democratic armor. Throughout the campaign, the wildcat banks were a sure-fire signal for booing at any crossroads meeting. The bungling of the five-million-dollar loan drew repeated catcalls. The general ineptness of Mason's administration because of feuds in the Legislature, friction in Congress and a do-nothing attitude on the part of jobholders was a fruitful source of Whig campaign oratory. The Whigs invented a synthetic animal with a wildcat hide and a stovepipe hat which they called a *loco foco*. This creature was supposed to be a Democratic voter. His only aim in life was the instinct to destroy his State and nation.

Even such things as economic conditions and changing prices favored the Whigs. While the campaign was in progress, a fresh wave of bank failures flowed across the State. This was, to Mason, the disappearance of the last thin straw of hope. The preceding spring session of the Legislature had been marked by the failure of one of Michigan's biggest and richest banks, the famed Michigan State Bank of Detroit. It was forced to close its doors because real-estate mortgages which it was holding throughout the State dwindled in value almost to the vanishing point. Throughout the summer, prices had been going down steadily as the once-spectacular wave of emigration dried up. People no longer had money to travel. They could not sell out in the East and finance a journey to Michigan. Farm land was going begging at five dollars an acre, and in the towns local storekeepers kept going somehow, even though their books showed total bankruptcy. Wheat, which was selling in Detroit the preceding winter at \$1.20 a bushel, now brought seventy-five cents. All other farm produce fell in proportion. Instead of promoting wildcat banks and demanding State grants of railroads, local businessmen

were now looking for day work on farms grubbing weeds.

In the face of such a spectacle, the Democratic campaign was as listless and indifferent as the Whigs' campaign was enthusiastic. "Turn the blackguards out!" cried the Whigs. "Reform! Reform!" Woodbridge did very little campaigning. The less he said, the better. He recognized the political truism that he could sit quietly at home and let the Democrats beat themselves. Mason, instead of taking the stump in his party's behalf, looked around Detroit for a vacant office wherein he could begin the practice of law. He shuddered at each mention of the campaign.

It was no surprise to anyone that the Whigs carried the State. On election day Mason was busy winding up his official affairs and wrapping up the wreckage of the five-million-dollar loan so that Woodbridge could find all the pieces. He signed his last batch of appointments, wrote his final reports to Washington, and cleaned out his desk.

Woodbridge, his watery eyes agleam with victory, entered the office. Mason politely beckoned him to be seated, and said he wanted to explain about the present status of the loan. He was deeply worried, Mason continued, about the Bank of the United States, in Philadelphia. It was said to be shaky, and might not be able to meet its installments on the bonds it had purchased through the Morris Canal and Banking Company. Pritchette, he said, was in Philadelphia at that very moment as Mason's representative, studying it. It was Pritchette's hope to get back all the Michigan bonds held there, and return them to the Treasurer. If he could get that part of the deal abrogated and get the bonds back, they would be in the State's custody until other buyers could be found. But if the Bank of the United States closed, Michigan would lose the bonds but would be required to keep paying interest to the bank's receiver.

This fear of the Bank of the United States was a widely held one in Detroit, Mason remarked. He said he had called on all the officials of the surviving Detroit banks, and they had advised him to get the State's bonds out of there with all speed.

They did not think the Morris Canal and Banking Company was going to weather the balance of the financial crisis, either. He advised Woodbridge, therefore, to bend all his energies to the task of retrieving all the Michigan bonds that remained with the Morris Canal and Banking Company after January 1, 1840. This would leave the State with about half the bonds sold and collected for, and the other half unsold.

Woodbridge nodded his white head and mumbled a polite agreement. He said he would act accordingly. While he was there, Woodbridge said, he would like to remind the Governor that it was the custom among States for the outgoing Governor to draft a farewell or "exaugural" address to the Legislature upon completing his term of office. Woodbridge would see that it was taken care of. Mason thanked him, and promised to comply.

Mason's mother told him that evening, the day following election day, that she had received a letter from John T., date-lined New York, asking her to come there for a few months to escape the worst of the Michigan winter. She felt well enough to travel, she said, and furthermore she did not want to be in the way when Julia and the baby arrived during the next few weeks. Mason affectionately bade her good-bye at the Randolph Street dock as she boarded the boat for Buffalo.

After her departure, Mason attended the inauguration ceremonies and watched Woodbridge being sworn in as Governor. Mason dropped suddenly from the public gaze. No longer did the newspapers inquire into his love life or his drinking habits. Gone were the long diatribes about his "youthful indiscretions" which allegedly sold out the State to the money barons of New York. With many a sigh of relief, Mason entered the practice of law in a little second-floor office in a new building not far from the capitol. As a partner he took in a newly admitted attorney a year or so younger than himself, E. B. Harrington of Port Huron. He looked forward to Pritchette's return and the establishment of a new firm to be called Mason & Pritchette. In the meantime, he thought,

young Harrington could help him in the office while he concentrated on getting clients.

He had left the service of the State nearly penniless. A carefully saved fund which he had built up over the course of his two terms as Governor was wiped out when the Michigan State Bank failed in March, 1839, with the savings of thousands of depositors like himself. He had enough to live on for a month or two, and to pay his office rent. Books for his law library had been given to him, one at a time, as they were published by the Secretary of State's office. He had all the Michigan Statutes and Public Acts, and a compilation of the Territorial Acts back as far as Governor Hull's time, thirty years before. On the wall he had framed his certificate to practice in Michigan, dated December 11, 1833. Often he liked to look at it, and think of the big blowoff which he, Ike Rowland and George Palmer had staged for their tutor, Pritchette, when they all passed the examination. He had another such certificate, dated July 23, 1834, admitting him to practice before the Supreme Court of the State. These were the only professional qualifications he needed. Besides, his father's old law library contained a great many valuable volumes which served him as references. Compared with most young attorneys setting up a practice, Mason was very well equipped indeed.

He was twenty-eight years old on October 27th, a week or two before the election which swept Woodbridge and the Whigs into office. Married, with one baby son, possessed of an adequate house which was big enough for a small family, owner of a fairly good law library and endowed with the aura of eight years as head of Michigan's administration, Mason should have become immensely wealthy in later life as Michigan's topmost legal figure. He had the ability, the background, the energy, and the expectation of about fifty years of practice on the road that lay ahead. According to all the textbooks on success, Mason's eight years as Governor and Territorial Secretary should have been just an incident in his longer, and more lucrative, rise to success.

We know that no such mellow pot of gold awaited him at the end of his rainbow. He had everything but good fortune, what we moderns call the "breaks". No man on the threshold of a new career should try to pierce the future. He might discover that ahead of him lay such a combination of circumstances as those which struck Stevens T. Mason at the outset of his legal career. They were blows which not only caused his untimely death, but which plunged his name into the mire of public contempt and held it there for sixty years. Anyone who would pull aside the curtains which conceal the future and see before him such a spectre, would have only one recourse—suicide.

He had just arranged the furniture in his new office and received a pen and inkwell from Harrington, and was trying to lure in a client who might want a will written, for example, when he received news of the sudden death of his beloved mother in New York, which occurred on November 24, 1839. The feeble Elizabeth had caught cold, or something, and had been running a temperature when she arrived in New York. John T. put her to bed and called a physician. But before any diagnosis could be arrived at, Elizabeth Moir Mason just quietly sighed, turned away her eyes, and died.

She was only fifty, but she had been in poor health since the birth and immediate death of her thirteenth child on April 5, 1833. Of those thirteen, only four were alive at the time of the funeral. Emily and the youngest daughter, Laura, attended it. Kate Mason Rowland and Stevens T. Mason were in Detroit, and their mother was cold in her grave before they knew what had happened. She had found peace after thirty years of turmoil.

3

His mother's sudden death plunged Mason into gloom. For days he did not come to his new office, but stayed at home and wrote letters to his father and to Julia, urging her to bring the baby and come out to Detroit as soon as spring reopened

the more comfortable canal and rail route across New York State and Lake Erie. For the past few years the care of his invalid mother had been some responsibility, but both he and John T. wanted her with them as much as possible. They felt toward her a deep admiration for her patient and enduring character; a warm affection for the thousands of incidents by which she had brightened their drab lives in their worst years in Kentucky. She had suffered so many family losses that she poured out her heart and her life on those who survived. Kate was married and mistress of her own house. Little Laura was eighteen at the time, and her mother knew that she, too, would soon marry and go away. Emily and Stevens T. were her two solid rocks of strength in a fluid world. She had been dividing her time between visits to them and to John T., wherever he happened to be. He might be anywhere. He was a mysterious and somewhat sinister figure in the Louisiana bayous, a powerful secret agent constantly stirring up a witch's brew of plots and uprisings. He had found the career that exactly suited him, and it had made him rich once more. He was influential both in New York and Washington, the king of Red River Valley land speculators, the man who seemed to be everywhere, completing some big deal every day.

His mother's death brought father and son closer than they had been during the past decade. Christmas, 1839, was a sad one for Mason. He felt terribly alone in the empty house. He tried to relieve the sadness by writing his father long letters. In them, just by way of conversation, he complained that he had no clients and did not seem able to attract any. His office was empty. No one would come near him for fear of offending the newly powerful Whigs, who hated him. The Whigs were quite outspoken about what they would think of anyone who so much as came near Mason's office. Some of Detroit's ever-bubbling population, who didn't play politics but did get into trouble, came to him for help in criminal cases like assault, drunkenness and other misdemeanors. He obtained a few small pleadings in civil actions, but not enough to claim that he had established a practice.

Upon Pritchette's return, Mason's spirits revived. He re-organized the partnership as Mason and Pritchette, with Harrison as a junior partner. He had cards printed, and a sign lettered on the window. The window overlooked the route which nearly everyone took in going to, and coming from, the capitol. The partners amused themselves by looking out of the window and gossiping about what this or that person had been doing up there. Occasionally Mason performed some desultory work on the "exaugural" message that he had promised Woodbridge to prepare.

When the Legislature convened on January 6, 1840, Mason sent his message to Governor Woodbridge. He still had friends out in the counties, and for their benefit he sent some copies of it to friendly newspaper editors. The editors passed it up the first day because of a more newsworthy event that occurred in the capitol on inauguration day. Retiring Lieutenant Governor Ed Mundy had been attacked in the corridor of the building by a particularly violent Whig, Colonel Edward Brooks of Detroit. Colonel Brooks had knocked Ed down and was beating him with a heavy cane when other people pulled him off. The Whig papers tried to play it down, because Colonel Brooks admitted he didn't have anything personal against Ed, but that he was infuriated past endurance at the mere sight of a Democrat in their Whig stronghold. The *Free Press* called it "the new Whig reign of terror". Ed was a gentleman about it. He was much bigger and stronger and could have thrown Colonel Brooks through a window had he not decided to be a martyr and take the beating. He waited for an apology. None came.

Next day the newspapers printed excerpts from Mason's "exaugural", and the people waited to see what Woodbridge would do with it. Nothing happened in the capitol building. Governor Woodbridge had not sent it to the Legislature. In the towns and villages it was clipped from the small weeklies and used in the schools as an example of beautiful English composition, full of noble thoughts. It was a sort of summary of the State's position at the time Mason relinquished control.

He was trying to state facts and stay away from charges that he might be painting too rosy a picture. The general tone of the message, therefore, was not optimistic. He described the boom conditions, and the wave of money speculation which had led to the State's exaggerated Internal Improvements project. He said he could well realize that now some of those projects would have to be abandoned, and others curtailed. He went into details above improvements in the State's administrative machinery, appropriations authorized for the militia, the geological survey and the penitentiary construction program. One by one he took up each problem the State was currently facing. Most of all, he warned his successors not to compromise with his great accomplishment in caring for primary schools and safeguarding his University.

"If there is one duty from us higher than another," he wrote, "it is to assert and defend the youthful fame of our rising commonwealth. When she is charged with want of resources, point to her abundant harvests and fertile fields. When she is thought to be broken in spirit, look to the energy of her husbandmen. And when she is said to be burdened with taxation, refer to your statute books and learn how limited is her burden compared with her neighboring and sister States."

After disposing of the business in the message, he concluded on a personal note. He gave this portion of the message a great deal of thought, and polished its phraseology.

"My official relations with you, fellow citizens, now terminate, and it remains only for me to take my respectful leave. On reviewing the period of my connection with the executive branch of the Government of Michigan, I find much both of pleasure and of pain . . . pleasure derived from the recollection of the generous confidence reposed in me by my fellow-citizens, and pain for the many unkind emotions to which my position has given rise. But seeking in private life that tranquillity and good-will heretofore denied me, I part from official station without one sigh of regret. I shall cling to every recollection making a claim upon my gratitude or service, and endeavor to forget the painful experience of the past.

"I cannot be insensible to the many errors I may have committed. But I derive consolation from the reflection that they will be amply repaired by the services of one whose experience is acknowledged, whose ability is known and whose patriotism is unquestioned. . . . Michigan shall have, wherever the vicissitudes of life shall place me, my earnest and continued desire for her prosperity and welfare, and my earnest and fervent prayer that He who holds in His hands the fate of nations and the destinies of men will bestow upon her every blessing a free and enlightened people can desire."

The mail for several days was full of letters from well-wishers out in the counties, congratulating Mason and claiming that no one, not even Woodbridge, could take offense at a lush compliment like that. They didn't know Woodbridge. He submitted it to the Legislature unofficially, and with expressions of contempt. The Whigs there booed it, would not read it, and refused to enter it upon the records. They treated it with hilarious jeers which were taken down by the official reporter. He called them "expressions of ridicule and sarcasm". Woodbridge told the editor of the *Detroit Advertiser*, the Whig organ, that Mason had used the utmost effrontery in trying to get such a message on the records, but fortunately the Legislature refused to have anything to do with it. The paper published this statement.

Mason awoke suddenly to the realization that Woodbridge had asked him to draft the message only to have an excuse to humiliate him publicly. The matter did not die down with Woodbridge's refusal to treat it as a public document. Editors of city papers in other States caught it up out of Michigan exchanges, and let go with blasts about Whig "intolerance", if they were Democratic, and "Democratic demagoguery", if they were Whig. The Democratic papers published Mason's long message in full. It was copied and paraphrased throughout the country. Editors used it as an example of what the Whigs would do if they won the national election in 1840.

Mason, cut to the quick, stayed in his office and hated to go outside. Woodbridge said nothing. He was just starting. The

Advertiser took up the old man's cudgel and whacked Mason again, with a story that Mason did not have Woodbridge's permission to draft the message in the first place. Angered, Mason played directly into Woodbridge's hand by sending him a personal letter demanding an explanation, and citing the original request from Woodbridge himself. Woodbridge replied suavely in a public letter:

"I am incapable of doing you injustice or even to evince toward you other than the courtesy I have always received from you."

Woodbridge now had Mason on the defensive, and was influencing the newspaper-reading public to believe that Mason was a sorehead, a selfish seeker after personal publicity, and had a bitter personal hatred for Woodbridge. While this campaign was in progress, Woodbridge, with excellent timing, began to wield the axe and tear down every accomplishment that Mason had built, except the impregnable school system. He began on the Internal Improvements project, because that was easiest to wreck. In a message to the Legislature he set forth in his characteristic phraseology his reasons for advising its complete extermination. It pained him to have to say so, but the whole scheme was visionary and "it must, I fear, be given up."

Work stopped on all the railroads. The sides fell in on the excavated portion of the Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal. All the construction crews were thrown out of work. This, said Woodbridge, was caused by "the degradation into which the Executive plunged the State" by trying to carry through a public-ownership plan. Times were bitterly hard, but not too hard for wealthy Detroit Whigs to organize the Michigan Central Railroad Company as a private corporation very soon after this news, and to begin a long battle to buy it from the State at a sacrifice price.

On the streets of Detroit, people who had been Mason's friends for many years began looking the other way. Urchins threw rocks at his gleaming stovepipe hat, as bystanders laughed.

In his next phase, Woodbridge unlimbered his heavy artillery and took sights on the five-million-dollar loan. He had, of course, the report that Mason had given him about Pritchette's negotiations with the Bank of the United States, in an effort to salvage the bonds before the bank failed. Woodbridge used this situation to make it appear that he alone had been dealing directly with the tottering institution; that it was Woodbridge who had decided to get the bonds back. Of course, this statement had the effect of making Mason appear to be a complete dunderhead and a bungler of colossal stupidity. He was regarded as an idiot to have gotten the State involved with that crowd of sharpers in the first place.

The Whig clique split up the bond business between the Bank of Michigan and the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank of Detroit, both of which had Whig presidents who had long been on the Woodbridge bandwagon. They were authorized to buy back the salvaged portion of the bonds, and resell them privately, at a profit in commissions. In order to allow these banks to assemble all their specie to buy back the bonds from the East, Woodbridge suggested to the Legislature that an exception might be made for the boys. A bill was put through exempting the two banks from the legal requirement to redeem their notes in specie. This was done very quietly, but not quietly enough to prevent the Democrats from learning about it.

Woodbridge was having everything his own way; Mason had nothing but bad luck. As soon as the Democrats began to rally behind Mason to expose this piece of favoritism, the Bank of the United States, and the Morris Canal and Banking Company, suspended payment. The Whigs screamed: "Just in the nick of time!" The people cheered Woodbridge's almost magic foresight. He appointed a committee to go East and get the bonds back, ignoring Mason's advice and Pritchette's weeks of work in Philadelphia achieving this very result.

The committee found it had nothing much to do, because Pritchette had done all the work long before. They thereupon turned into a gang of super-snoopers, and went foraging

through the correspondence in the files between Mason and the Morris Canal and Banking Company, hoping to find something upon which to base a charge that Mason and Pritchette had received a slice of the fee paid to the Eastern bank at the time the contract was signed. This was one step in Woodbridge's over-all strategy. He wanted to send Mason to prison on some such charge, which would discredit the Democrats for a generation. It would serve the supplementary purpose of putting Mason behind bars, or drive him far away where the people would never hear the ringing voice of the Boy Governor again.

Psychologists might see in Woodbridge's savage policy toward Mason a feeling of insecurity, an inferiority complex, or possibly a fear that Mason might come back from political exile and wallop him in the next election. In Woodbridge's view it was imperative to get Mason out of Detroit. If he wouldn't go peaceably, Woodbridge proposed to run him out forcibly. Mason was the only man in Michigan the toothless Woodbridge really feared. He was too popular. Even after this series of debacles, thousands of people throughout Michigan almost worshipped Mason as a great figure. As long as he maintained a law office under the very shadow of the capitol, Woodbridge knew that he was not safe.

Accordingly, Governor Woodbridge, on March 10, 1840, received the report of this little committee, and ordered twice the usual number of copies printed. The few surviving Democrats in the Legislature were growing heartily sick of these vitriolic attacks upon Mason. One of them heard about this report and seized a chance to read it privately.

He smuggled a copy of it outside. The Democrats held an indignation meeting and hurried to the *Free Press* office. They shouted that Mason was about to be assailed by a pack of lies which would get the whole committee indicted and tried for libel if the report were published.

When the news was brought to him, Woodbridge hastily changed his tactics. He had the report brought up in the House at the last moment before adjournment. Then he allowed the

majority Whig version to be read, and hastily adjourned the Legislature before the minority Democratic version could be put into the record.

The report of the Whigs reads like a tattletale child telling mama what the boy next door did. Ignoring the pertinent fact that Pritchette had instituted the attempt to regain Michigan's bonds, Chairman DeGarmo Jones insisted that the whole matter had been dug up by the sleepless energy of the Whig committee. He said in the report: "Had the Act been consummated at the time and in the manner proposed, it must have been *entirely illegal*; a *daring fraud* upon the interests of the State, and highly discreditable to all parties concerned. The stigma of violated faith must, ere this, have been indelibly fixed upon our escutcheon and the credit of the State irretrievably gone." This was what was alleged to have been in store for Michigan *if* the committee had not discovered that Mason was dickering with the Morris Canal and Banking Company, and Pritchette with the Bank of the United States, for the return of the bonds. It does not make sense. But perhaps it was not intended to bear analysis. The report was read aloud, with the underscored phrases heavily emphasized. Members in the back rows probably heard: "*entirely illegal . . . daring fraud . . . credit of the State irretrievably gone.*" It appears that this was the sole purpose of the report.

The exasperated Democrats got their minority report into the *Free Press* after some effort. Under the signature of Samuel Etheridge of Coldwater, it set forth the well-established fact that the very matter the Whigs were yelping about had been foreseen and thwarted by Governor Mason long before the Whigs were in office. The Democratic document continued for several paragraphs, proving point by point that Mason had taken every possible step to forestall such loss to the State from mismanagement of the fund. Then it openly accused the Whigs of fomenting a popular reaction against Mason because they were afraid of him, and asked why the Whigs were doing it. The whole sordid affair was a black eye for Michigan na-

tionally. It was going to bounce back and become a problem for the very Whigs who were now yelling the loudest for Mason's hide.

"No effort has been spared to place the monetary affairs of our State before the world in their worst possible form. These constant and clamorous assertions of the absolutely desperate condition of Michigan are everywhere producing the most disastrous results, and in the end these predictions of ruin will bring about their own fulfillment. No motive appears strong enough to prevent everything from being dragged into the political arena. Every good custom, and well-established principle, vanished before the demand for political capital. No art is too low, no tongue too base to be used in trumpeting to the world everything which seems calculated to ruin the credit of the State and depress her interests at home, provided that a political object can be attained."

A set of thoroughly angry men wrote that, and when other men read it in the newspapers, they too became angry. Mason remained quiet. Not even the accusation that he and Pritchette had split a fee from the Morris Canal and Banking Company could break the unnatural stillness of his law office. He and Pritchette sat there, at empty desks in a clientless office, day after day. They could not be tricked again into replying to anything.

Throughout the settled portions of the State there was unspoken sympathy for Mason, but no overt act which would bring down the mallet of the Whig framing machine. No one dared speak openly in his defense excepting himself, and everything he said was twisted into an accusation, and used as the basis of another plot against him.

Silence is probably the only defense against that sort of persecution. As a means of earning a living in the law business, however, silence has its drawbacks. Mason's finances were rapidly becoming precarious. He could not afford to sit there and wear down the Whigs' schemings, and conversely he could not practice law because clients were afraid to go to him. Soon after the opening of navigation on Lake Erie, Julia and the

baby arrived in Detroit. Their presence made the question of actual survival eclipse everything else in Mason's mind.

The tragic, sudden death of his mother at the outset of this crusade against him had robbed him of the concentration he needed to think through a plan for saving the situation. Now, in the spring of 1840, when he most needed it, he had no idea of how to attack the problem. Undoubtedly he had scant interest in what might happen to him. He was thinking only of how to protect Julia and the baby.

His work smashed, all his achievements threatened, his political career falling about his ears in great chunks in the form of vile and slanderous personal abuse, Mason now found himself penniless and without means of earning a living. Woodbridge was winning. Mason could give up, and go to New York. But he determined to stay and fight it through.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WRECK OF THE GOVERNOR MASON

I

THE FIRST steamboat built in western Michigan slid down the ways into the Grand River, at Grand Rapids, on June 14, 1837. It was an elegant white-decked passenger side-wheeler, and Governor Mason, then at the peak of his popularity, had sponsored her. He had presented the craft with an expensive set of flags and colors in recognition of the honor. The S. S. *Governor Mason* was launched, at a time when Mason was nationally famous, and his popularity at home was something so alive that he seemed like an incarnated statue. In May, 1840, the S. S. *Governor Mason* was wrecked on a reef near Muskegon harbor.

The fortunes of her sponsor went down to ruin with her. The wreck was an omen. Mason seemed to be lying there just as helplessly, with the gales of adversity pounding him to pieces. On all sides of him he saw Whigs, slander, plot after shameless plot to smash what was left of his life. He would not leave Detroit while his enemies could say that they had done it; they had driven him out in disgrace. No matter what happened to him, Mason knew that he must stay in Detroit until he weathered this storm and regained his public position as a distinguished citizen.

Woodbridge and his clique of Whigs lost no time in gloating while their man was down. He wasn't out yet, and they had to finish him quickly. He might revive. They had tried embarrassing him before the Legislature, accusing him of dishonesty, and finally they had practically picketed his office and kept him from gaining clients. But the victim was still conscious and was glaring up at them like a winded fighter

on the canvas measuring his opponent for a haymaker as soon as he gets up.

Mason remembered that Congress had tried some such squeeze play on him in 1835, during the border dispute. He had found a way out then. He must find another now. He tried, dazed, to think of one. What were they afraid of? Why did Woodbridge flirt with the criminal laws himself in order to place Mason in a false light as an embezzler? It must be that in the State, or in Detroit, there were a good many people left who loved the Mason legend, looked up to him, and would cling to him.

Mason still had influence, driven underground now but still in being in spite of the Whigs. He still had friends—enough to worry old Woodbridge. These stalwart friends must get up and say publicly that they would stand by him. They would become shock troops ahead of him and eventually they would win his battle for him.

There was a Presidential election coming up during the summer and fall of 1840. It would be Mason's excuse to go head-first into politics again. He would try to rally the defeated and scattered Democrats. He would get back into the public eye, and stay there. Before Woodbridge could concoct another frame-up, Mason would have time to organize a good-sized slice of the population along strictly pro-Mason lines.

In this, as in all battles for personal popularity, Mason was a sure winner. With renewed courage he shut the door of his office and began walking the streets, hours at a time. He smiled; he bowed to the ladies. He stopped to talk to old acquaintances, and they were pleased. He went to the American Hotel, to Uncle Ben Woodworth's Steamboat Hotel, to the distant but well-loved gathering place of the Democrats, soldiers and rivermen at Conrad Ten Eyck's tavern. Everyone bought him drinks, clapped him on the shoulder, milled around him. "Do you remember the time those Patriots stole the chest of muskets right out from under old 'Coon's' nose?" Mason's voice pierced the tobacco smoke: "Yes, and where were you when those red-coats started out of the pits across the river?" "Who, him?"

Why, he was sleepin' under them flour sacks, the time they got away with the schooner *Ann!*" Laughter, and another round.

The tension was relieved as long as he was one of a crowd. It hurt most when he was at home, watching baby Stevens T. chewing on his tiny toes and regarding the world with a round blue eye that was so serious it always brought a smile to his father's tired face. Julia bustled about the narrow rooms, scolding the two colored servants and bringing to the little house the cheering presence of a busy and happy housewife.

Miraculously, Pritchette got a couple of big cases, and Mason himself received a retainer from a wealthy client, a commission merchant. Came the day when the Democratic handbills went swirling onto wooden front porches and were tacked to bulletin boards, announcing the "Great Democratic Jubilee" at the City Hall council chamber. The auditorium was full of noisy Democrats when Mason arrived to search for a seat. When he was discovered, the Democrats started yelling: "Mason! Mason! Mason!" It was one of the great thrills of his life.

He took a chair on the platform instead, and made a brief extemporaneous talk. The Democrats did so well that they held another jubilee a few days later, and Mason received a rousing roar of welcome when he entered. He was the principal speaker at the second meeting, an act of defiance to Woodbridge which he would have thought himself incapable of exhibiting a few weeks previously.

"He was still the *beau ideal* of the Democrats," wrote Hemans. "In the frank and unaffected democracy of his nature, the spirit in which he resisted attack, and the natural urbanity of his manner, there was that which typified the sentiment of his time."

The Democrats evidently thought he was all of that, and more. As the first few days of the 1840 pre-campaign bustle began to stir Detroit, Mason was propelled into the first rank of the party committee. He was trying to practice law, and needed the money desperately. His prominence as a Demo-

crat gradually brought the office a little business, enabling Mason to make more friends in politics, which in turn brought a small volume of new clients. Pritchette did the law work; Mason brought in the clients.

At least he was able to devote himself wholeheartedly to the task of organizing a Democratic defense against the Whig "log-cabin and hard-cider" campaign of 1840. His spirits came up out of the cellar. He wrote to Sister Laura, at school in Troy:

"For the winter, I have been trying to confine myself to the quiet routine of an attorney's office, but as might have been expected, all my efforts have failed. I had hoped when retiring from public life I might have some respite from the toils of politics, but find myself as deep in the game as ever. So, what with the divided allegiance between the law-office and political speech-making, I am more occupied than ever. . . . You will find Detroit sadly changed. The bubble of false prosperity has burst from under us, and we are down again to the realities of earth. The streets every day look like Sunday, and in every direction you hear nothing but the croakings of hard times. But we may extract a jewel from adversity, and will learn wisdom enough to last us in later life. . . . You have yet to see *your nephew*, whose praises have been so often recorded. He may be considered the greatest prodigy of the age, and although I say it, he is the most beautiful and intelligent youngster in the Republic. In a few days he mounts his first short dresses, the first great epoch in his onward march to manhood. I shall turn him over to you and Emily when you arrive, and rest assured you'll have your hands full, for he is already the very personification of mischief."

Apparently he was feeling better. He did not know what the campaign would be like, but he was glad to be doing something. And he had gained a breathing spell in the Woodbridge fight. The old fox was in his hole. He had not made a single comment about Mason, or indicted him for anything, for several weeks. The plain fact of Mason's presence in Detroit

was proof of the young man's victory. The added implication in Mason's skyrocketing popularity made Woodbridge's whole attack upon him collapse like a punctured balloon.

At least that was the revived Mason's impression of the affair as he collected his meagre portion of the office income and sat down to write another political speech. Everything seemed to be going splendidly. Julia was pregnant again.

When the Presidential campaign began in earnest, Mason was not so sure that the sky was rosy. The Whigs had a new trick in 1840, one that rapidly captured the imagination of the country. They had a slogan: "Tippecanoe and Tyler too!" It sounded childish and cryptic. Tippecanoe was a battlefield in the War of 1812, which was still being fought on the political front. The alleged winner of this dramatic conflict was a grizzled old man named General William Henry Harrison, the man who had taken a resounding beating from Van Buren in the previous election. But in his first charge into the political arena in 1836, "Old Tip," as he was jokingly called, didn't have a strategy board to do his thinking for him.

In 1840 he had an excellent staff, composed of some of the best brains in the country; able men who had imagination, promotional ability and resources. They conceived the idea of surrounding the old warrior with a stage setting consisting of log cabins, jugs of cider, sunbonneted maidens and all the props of an old-time silent Western horse opera. "Old Tip," it appeared, was supposed to represent the pioneer spirit which had made America great. Since he was a Whig, the Whigs had made America great. It was a forceful argument, especially since Van Buren's administration had been one long financial crisis and a slow funeral march behind dead fortunes, hopes and achievements.

The country was ripe for change. Mason had learned that in Michigan. It was the party's turn to learn it nationally. The Whigs had little to sell except the vague promise that they could do better, based on nothing very tangible. Hence they went in heavily for entertainment to disguise their lack of a convincing platform.

The log-cabin craze hit Michigan as early as April, 1840. Whig partisans went out into the near-by forests and worked up an honest sweat, for once, logging. They built a big cabin at the northeast corner of Jefferson and Randolph, only a few blocks from Mason's house. It was forty by fifty feet. On April 15th they assembled a big crowd for the traditional "raising"; they put a jug of hard cider beneath each of the four corners, and decorated the outside with rabbit skins, coon skins and such. Inside, the chandelier was made from the tangled roots of a small tree, suspended from the roof, and bearing a white forest of dripping candles. They chained a live bear outside, suspended a few stuffed owls, wildcats and raccoons around the interior, and on April 21st the Whigs all gathered in pioneer costume for a "hoe-down". This dedication was advertised on handbills, asking the Whig ladies to furnish "corn-bread, an other such log-cabin fare as their kind hearts and ingenuity might dictate".

This shindig promptly turned into a wild community square dance and church supper combined, with almost no hint that it might have a political meaning. "Needless to say," runs an account, "they responded liberally to the call and at the appointed hour the ladies had loaded the tables about the cabin wall with johnnycake, pork and beans, and the substantial fare of pioneer Michigan. A large crowd gathered, and in the fitful glare of a tallow dip listened to the orator of the occasion, dispatched the provisions, and finished the festivities with many a toast drunk in hard cider. From this time until the election, the political rally was the order of the day, Whigs gathering at the cabin, and Democrats at the City Hall."

The log-cabin craze swept the country in the same mysterious manner as bobby soxers and swoon crooners a century later. Every town big enough to boast a few Whig committeemen built a cabin in the public square and kept it liberally supplied with hard cider. The yell: "*Tip*-pecanoe and *Ty*-ler too!" roared across the West like wildfire. The foot-patting rhythm of agonized fiddles and tinny banjos was echoed by the squeals and shouts of dancing citizens, while local orators whooped

it up for the Whigs. While this extremely clever ruse was monopolizing people's attention, the Democrats proceeded to do some dignified, old-fashioned campaigning, to which few people listened.

Vice-President Richard M. Johnson, Mason's Tammany friend, and a hero of the War of 1812 fully as famed as "Old Tip", came through Detroit on a campaign junket. He was wined and dined by the local Democrats. They put up a stand in front of the National Hotel, decorated it with bunting, and called on Mason to introduce the distinguished guest. This he proceeded to do with his customary grace and elegance. The *Free Press* reporter said he drew a good crowd, and that Mason "was greeted with the heartfelt and peculiar enthusiasm which always attends his appearance." Mr. Johnson gave utterance to a campaign speech, and the committee led the way to a surviving patch of apple orchard on the now-vanishing Cass farm, which had been turned into a picnic ground. The Whigs had the effrontery to toss in a batch of their handbills announcing another free feed at the log cabin a few days later. It, too, was a huge success.

On this occasion the Whigs received a State-wide response. One hundred and three wagons bearing 600 people came from the little suburb of Farmington. The Dearborn Whigs arrived on a float, a log cabin on wheels drawn by twenty yoke of oxen. The Whigs had some 15,000 noisy partisans in the city. They brought great heaps of food from their farms, and the committee took over Williams and Wilson's big warehouse to dish it out to all comers. In the evening they held neighborhood mass meetings all over town. After that, anything the Democrats did was an anticlimax.

Mason could see throughout the campaign that the Democrats were in for a thorough beating. Toward the last stages of it he lost interest. Before election day would arrive, he knew, Julia's second baby would be due. Delivery of Julia's precious child in such a raw frontier town as Detroit was unthinkable to her. It just couldn't be. Stevens would have to take her to New York. He must leave before the election.

Stevens did not require much urging. He found the money somewhere and made his plans. Fortunately, the client who paid him the retainer in his darkest days produced some additional business in the East which would keep him occupied for several weeks. Furthermore, at this moment of indecision over his future plans, the white-haired John T. wrote him one of those fatherly letters which parents like to write to sons in times of crisis, causing them some moments of indecision.

In this letter, his father suggested that he ought to locate in the East permanently, and get away from Detroit. Regardless of his popularity there, John T. declared, he would have a much better chance of success as a lawyer if he went to some place like Baltimore, where he had no connections and no background to disturb his concentration upon his career. Now, Baltimore, continued John T., was a great city. It was a coming city. It had immense commercial interests and growing shipping and warehousing firms. There was a future for him in Baltimore.

Mason decided to visit Baltimore and investigate. He did not want to be committed to anything. If he felt that he had a better chance in Detroit, he'd stay. It depended in great measure upon the outcome of his long trip East, and his impressions of the places to which his legal inquiries took him. He talked it over with Pritchette. His partner, too, felt that he had better go. As for Pritchette himself, he said he had decided to stay in Detroit. If Mason wanted to come back the following spring, and resume the partnership, Pritchette would be delighted.

It was early by the political calendar, but alarmingly late by the stork's, when Mason and Julia, with little Stevens, Jr., wrapped in blankets, departed from Detroit during the first week in October, 1840. He did not stay for the election returns. It was well that he didn't, because his judgment about the result was well substantiated. The Whigs took Michigan along with most of the rest of the voting centers in the United States. They catapulted the aged William Henry Harrison into the White House by a smashing vote. The margin in

Michigan was surprisingly narrow, but the Whigs took the vast majority of the elective offices which were being contested.

Two sidelights on the election were so characteristic of Michigan that they deserve to be mentioned, although Mason was too far away to be influenced. The first was that, immediately after the national Whig victory, old William Woodbridge told his legislative whips that he was going to grab the impending vacancy in the U. S. Senate. Lucius Lyon's term was up. The Legislature, now overwhelmingly Whig, obeyed. It announced the election of Woodbridge to be the new U. S. Senator, to take office March 4, 1841. He did not miss a day from a public payroll. He held office as Governor right up to the day he was sworn in as Senator, and he stayed on the Senatorial payroll almost until the outbreak of the Civil War.

The Senatorial toga had been the ultimate dream of old Woodbridge ever since he first entered politics. One would have believed that now, since his ambition had been realized and its acceptance would take him out of Michigan forever, he would have dropped the Mason persecution program. He had no more to fear from Mason and no motive for bothering him. This, of course, is what one would think, if one did not know William Woodbridge.

The second sidelight in the election was known as "l'affaire Hamtramk". Hamtramk was a little town populated mostly by German-American immigrants which had grown up in Wayne County almost at Detroit's doorstep. It has furnished a great deal of political news during the past century, and in our time Hamtramk is an independent city entirely surrounded by the sprawling metropolis of Detroit. In Mason's time it was a political question mark. The Whigs carried Michigan by the uncomfortably close margin of 22,759 to 21,464. The slow returns from distant villages kept the result in a dangerous tie for several days. Eventually all the returns were in but those from Hamtramk. Outside, in Hamtramk Township, the Democrats showed majorities ranging from 126 to 130 for all their candidates, which reflected the locality's general habit of voting the straight Democratic ticket. In the town proper,

the council had stipulated separate ballots for members of the Legislature, fearing a contested vote which would have to be patiently examined afterward. None of these ballots could be found. Investigators discovered that the official guardian of the ballot box had been a Democrat. He was sitting there, he said, when a Whig friend of his came up and asked him how he'd like a drink. Well, sir, first thing you know, he was higher'n a kite and had forgotten all about them ballots. They'd just vanished.

The missing ballots hung up the Legislature like a side of beef. It stood at six Whigs elected from Wayne County, and six Democrats. This tie continued elsewhere in the State, and the missing ballots contained the balance of power in both Houses. The search was redoubled. Nothing was found. Later, when the Legislature had to convene anyhow in this hamstrung condition, loud cries broke out from both sides. Something had to be done about it, and soon. The Wayne County canvassers replied that they couldn't do anything about it under the law except appeal to the Legislature, which they were then doing.

The Democrats unanimously demanded a new and better supervised election in Hamtramk. This was booed down by the Whigs. One of their members was ill and could not serve, and his removal would break the tie and give the Democrats a 22-21 majority of one vote—enough to dominate the whole legislative program. At the crucial moment, before the ill Whig left, a Democrat failed to answer roll call. With a temporary 22-21 majority, the Whigs certified the election as closed, refusing to take a chance on Hamtramk's whims in a new election there. In a few weeks the situation caused by illness and absence settled down to a permanent one-vote Whig majority, 22-21. The Democrats protested, wanted a new election, but the one Whig vote prevented it.

Mason read about it in the papers forwarded to him in New York. He gave the incident only a casual glance, because after election he was rather busy. Julia's second child was a beautiful, sturdy little girl, born in mid-October. After the family had consulted with the parents, she was baptized Dorothea Eliza.

When he was assured that no sudden crisis was about to arise, and that both were doing well, Mason bade them a fond farewell and set out for Baltimore.

2

While Mason was handling his client's legal affairs in the East, the Michigan Legislature met in Detroit for its regular session in January, 1841. The complaints and recriminations about the missing Hamtramk ballots occupied it for a time, but about a week later both Houses decided to forget the Whigs' one-vote majority and get down to business. Before them was a long list of legislative *musts*. They had to review the State's entire financial position, and decide what, if anything, they were going to do with Mason's monument, the Internal Improvements project.

Construction had been stopped on the Central Railroad, then started again in late 1840. The road had thirty miles to go to Jackson. A pittance was appropriated, enough to maintain the Central's equipment until it could be sold at a fair price to the new private railroad company.

The State had more than two millions tied up in the Central, and the towns along it were raising such a furore that the Legislature had to keep it going. The Legislature's chief purpose was to protect the road against an attempt by the private company to acquire it cheaply for scrap, or salvage, prices.

Both the Northern and Southern roads were doomed. The Southern had been constructed between Monroe and Adrian, and there it terminated. Some years later, after a hectic existence as a municipal railroad owned by the City of Monroe, it was sold, by Monroe and by the State jointly, to the Lake Shore Railroad, which then became the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern. Only the name survived. The original Adrian-Toledo route was abandoned and a new line surveyed and built, and shortly after 1900 the whole system, along with the Central, became operating subsidiaries of the New York Central Lines.

The Northern Railroad died a-borning. This session of the Legislature finally agreed to give it \$30,000 and turn it into a wagon road. The Clinton and Kalamazoo, too expensive for private financing, was never completed. The St. Mary's Falls Canal at the Soo became the scene of a disgraceful brawl between the State's contractor and the U. S. Army. The contractor insisted on running the excavation across the parade ground of Fort Brady. Soldiers with bayonets drove off the diggers, which was probably what the contractor wanted. He said he couldn't continue and sued the State for \$30,000 damages. By the time he had been paid off and the Army's ruffled feelings smoothed, the Legislature was heartily sick of the Soo Canal and hated Mason for having saddled them with its organization.

The whole magnificent Internal Improvements program degenerated into a political mess. The most odorous aspect of the refuse pile was the stench of burning fifty-dollar bills arising from the ruin of Mason's five-million-dollar loan.

Woodbridge sat in the Governor's office, meditating. He was due to leave for Washington permanently within a couple of months. He had inspired widespread criticism of this sudden departure to take a better job. There were people who thought that since he had campaigned for the Governorship and nearly mangled Mason to get there, he had some slight interest in becoming Governor. They now discovered that they had been fooled; he was just using the job as a steppingstone to the Senate. The ambitious plans which Woodbridge had unfolded during his campaign, aimed at the recovery of the State, now stood revealed as merely campaign literature.

Naturally, there were murmurings. The best way to offset this feeling of dissatisfaction, Woodbridge apparently felt, would be to dig up some more charges against Mason and really cause a sensation. This, from the Woodbridge viewpoint, would achieve a dual effect. It would distract public attention from himself and furnish a new topic of gossip, while creating an impression that Woodbridge was a relentless reformer who would leave no stone unturned to achieve the ends of justice,

even if he signed Mason's imprisonment order with his coat half on and the boat whistle blowing at the dock.

Accordingly, Woodbridge once more got up steam in his framing machine. This time the aged schemer went too far, and touched off such an explosion that the echo reverberated throughout his generation and the next. It is difficult to judge Woodbridge's motives correctly. Perhaps he meant merely to create an effect, whereupon he could make a graceful exit. He may not have intended to put Mason physically in the very prison the Boy Governor had built, but his opening moves looked like it. He drew up a plan which was aimed at indicting and trying Mason for criminal conspiracy and embezzlement.

The awkward fact that Mason was not guilty of any such crime made it necessary for Woodbridge and his cohorts to forge documents, present perjured testimony, hide witnesses, change records, and in general concoct a wholly synthetic case. But he had the vital ace in his sleeve.

Woodbridge had access to the records; Mason did not. He could keep the files from being examined by Mason's defenders. He could inspire lies in the Legislature and enter falsehoods in the records as evidence before his investigating committee. He and his henchmen could, and did, say anything they liked in accusation while rigidly denying Mason a chance to speak a word in his own behalf.

Serene in the knowledge that he thus had a pretty fair hand stacked in his political deck, Woodbridge opened by sending to the Legislature an entirely fraudulent legal paper purporting to be a bill in chancery on the part of the State of Michigan against the Morris Canal and Banking Company. It was addressed to the Chancellor of the State of New Jersey, and was accompanied by a report from the State Treasurer, Robert Stuart. It demanded the return of certain moneys alleged to have been fraudulently collected by Governor Stevens T. Mason while engaged in the contract negotiations.

About the year 1905, Lawton Hemans spent many tedious days digging through the New Jersey State records, and he says that no such chancery bill ever was sent to the Chancellor.

He declared that if the purpose of Woodbridge's move was to blacken Mason's character, "it was most skillfully adapted to the purpose". This document was submitted to the finance committee of the State Senate, headed by DeGarmo Jones. A minor Woodbridge stooge, Jones had been used repeatedly by the old man to accomplish his less public skulduggeries. He was the same Jones who had headed the investigating committee once before. Jones knew what was expected of him. He locked up the papers and announced that a most secret investigation was going on and that Mason was heavily involved.

At this, most of Mason's friends in Detroit came rallying to the rescue. Pritchette demanded a hearing and was refused. Benjamin Witherell, a Whig but a good friend of Mason's, stepped forward and volunteered to act as the Mason defense counsel. Jones refused to allow him to bring up any evidence of Mason's innocence, and denied him the right to cross-examine those witnesses produced by the State. Witherell was a famous attorney, and he knew the law. He carried the matter to the floor of the Senate and demanded a clear statement of the charges, if any, against Mason. A vote was taken and the Whig majority silenced him.

Frantic letters were now dispatched to Mason, in New York, urging him to get back to Michigan as fast as he could. Mr. Witherell, among others, wrote that only Mason himself could do any good; it was Mason's continuing popularity in the State that was at the bottom of the trouble. A great popular pressure by Mason's host of friends everywhere might halt a certain miscarriage of justice. The Legislature was sitting tight and taking orders from Woodbridge. It was plain that he had a completely worked out plan of campaign, of which only the first step had been revealed.

These letters caught Mason totally unprepared. He had not imagined that anything like this would happen, because there was no sane explanation for it. Hastily bundling up the family against the blasts of winter on the Ontario roads, Mason and Julia set off at top speed for Detroit.

He arrived too late. The hush-hush investigating committee

had made its report to Woodbridge in the greatest secrecy, under date of March 27, 1841. Not even Mr. Witherell was permitted to see it. But it was entered at once as an official record, and the obedient Legislature set about naming a "hanging committee".

It was before this legislative committee that Jones' report finally was revealed. Even there, Mason's friends had the opportunity to learn of its details only through gossip and insinuation, because the committee kept it out of sight and would not make its contents public. Eventually, about the time that Mason arrived breathless in Detroit in early April, it was admitted to the record and publication was possible.

The report outlined a clear case of embezzlement and conspiracy against Mason. It stated that State Treasurer Stuart had undertaken direct negotiations with the Morris Canal and Banking Company, under authority from the Legislature to "secure the unpaid installments on the loan". During the course of these inquiries, continued the report, State Treasurer Stuart had uncovered evidence that Mason "had sought and derived financial profit" from the loan. This evidence was contained in an appended statement from Theodore Romeyn, who testified under oath that he had been present with Governor Mason at the time the arrangements were made to rebate part of the fee which the State had paid to the canal directors at the time the contract was signed.

In vain Mason raised his voice and pointed to Romeyn's previous statement in 1839, that he had not "directly or indirectly" drawn any money from the State nor from Governor Mason. In the new statement Romeyn changed his whole story and declared that he had, that both he and Mason had been paid by the directors for enabling them to make a \$125,000 fee. He admitted that both he and Mason were guilty, and he, for himself, threw himself upon the mercy of the Legislature.

Mason, in Mr. Witherell's company, tried to get the Legislature to listen to him. They were refused. Woodbridge would not admit Mason to his office. In terror, Mason tried to find a few friendly Whigs who might present his case to the com-

mittee. No one would help him. Romeyn was not present personally during any of this so-called "investigation." But he presently sent Mason a personal letter, which the Whigs entered in the record before Mason received it. In it Romeyn said:

"I think if I could see you in person we could arrange answers [to the committee's investigation] that would be more satisfactory than if published without consultation."

Mason was aghast. He was being brazenly framed. He realized a fact which his friends had known for weeks, that Romeyn was a major figure in the plot and was acting on Woodbridge's instructions.

The discovery that nothing he could say would make the slightest difference seemed to take the heart out of Mason's will to win. He had been in battles before. This was not a battle; it was a slaughter. He didn't have a chance. Gradually he ceased to care. He roused himself finally, went down to his dusty office and sat down to write. He had only one source of help. That was the people, as Mr. Witherell had advised. He would write and publish a personal appeal to them, if friends would help him pay for the printing. Woodbridge was standing pat now, with all the face cards, waiting for Mason to push in his chips. The old man had everything his own way. He had given orders that Mason was not to be heard before the Legislature; none of his documentary evidence was admitted, and his witnesses were refused permission to testify. Not one word in Mason's defense was admitted to the records and thus given a chance for publication with the committee's report.

On May 11th, Mason began distributing a lengthy pamphlet, running to forty pages of closely set type. On its first page it bore a big double line of black, bold-faced type: "TO THE PEOPLE OF MICHIGAN".

This pamphlet was Mason's defense. If he had been permitted to present it in the Legislature, the plot would have collapsed. If the pamphlet had been condensed and extracted for newspaper publication, that would have helped. Distributed

by mail, to a list composed mostly of Democrats, it reached only a few people who had an influence with anybody in the State administration. Individuals were powerless to help him. And the State wouldn't.

A few copies are still treasured in old family albums in Michigan. There are originals in some city libraries. They are just curiosities now, and modern readers cannot see Mason's lifeblood pouring out all over the narrow, wrinkled pages. It was there; probably his tears, too.

Patiently he recounted all the steps in the negotiation of the loan, from its earliest beginnings. He dwelt at some length on Robert Stuart's story about his alleged discoveries. "Nothing could be more false!" declared the pamphlet. History agrees, but at the time it must have sounded like a hollow phrase. The type rolls monotonously onward. Mason arrives at the point in his narrative wherein DeGarmo Jones and his partner, James M. Edwards, on the finance committee, enter the plot. He calls them "my violent personal and political enemies, pliant instruments to aid their work of infamy", and tells how he first found them in Detroit, "one a starveling refugee from abroad and the other an *unacquitted felon* of this city. Such were the instruments chosen by the committee to blacken my reputation during my absence from the State."

Page after page of documentary proof of his innocence follows. He had kept some of the original correspondence addressed to him by members of the Morris Canal and Banking Company directorate, and this he quotes at length. He quotes Mr. Biddle as having said that the deal was an advantageous one for the State of Michigan. Finally, obviously exhausted and thoroughly sick at heart, Mason closed with a feeble appeal to be remembered as he once was, when the State was prospering and he was leading a happy people.

"I have thus, fellow citizens, endeavored to place before you a full answer to all the accusations preferred against me by the committee. Whilst I am free to acknowledge that there is no external reward so dear to me as the good opinion of my fellow citizens, even to secure that reward I

would not mistake the grounds of my defense. I act as a private citizen, unjustly and ruthlessly assailed. Circumstances render it probable that I shall never again be a candidate for your suffrages. I have therefore no political purpose to effect. I strike in defense of my name and all that is dear to me. I have left your service poorer than I entered it, and if I have any earthly boast, it is that I have never intentionally wronged the public. That I have felt the imputations against me I do not pretend to deny, but the consciousness of my own integrity of purpose has afforded me an inward pride and satisfaction that the world cannot rob me of. To the people of Michigan I owe many obligations, and with the last pulsations of life I shall acknowledge and remember their kindness."

"STEVENS T. MASON"

Throughout the State, farmers held this fine type to the flickering light of a tallow dip and read it aloud to their families. Women quietly sobbed. Villagers huddled in subdued groups and spoke darkly of what they would do if Woodbridge didn't let up. Mason's old friends foregathered in Ten Eyck's tavern and wondered if a monster parade and mass meeting would help. All the people, everywhere, wondered what Woodbridge was trying to do, and why he was doing it. Woodbridge didn't say. He just kept on. A few days after the appearance of the pamphlet, the Whig newspapers carried an open letter from Romeyn to Mason in which the conspirator told Mason to take it like a man; that they were both guilty and, further, they were guilty of other things, too, which he did not explain.

As a matter of simple justice, one Detroit newspaper did relent long enough to publish a stinging reply from Mason in which he called Romeyn a liar and quoted from documentary evidence to prove it. The cleverest part of the episode was the masterful control by which Woodbridge denied every shred of Mason's defense any hearing whatever. Secondarily, the pressure he put on Romeyn to accuse himself thus publicly as a thief

and an embezzler, along with Mason, must have been tremendous.

Woodbridge won a complete victory. Mason was crushed, the Whigs heard no more from him, and Woodbridge prepared to depart for Washington. It seems to us that he neglected to go on with the plot and indict Mason. He just left the whole thing in mid-air and left majestically for the Senate.

Until the appearance of the curious figure named Lawton Hemans in the Mason legend, and his superb research into Mason's life about 1900, that is the way matters stood in Michigan. Mason was finished as a public character for all time. His very name continued, generation after generation, to collect abuse and vile anecdotes. The Whigs disappeared and were replaced by the Republican Party, which held power for many years. There was no one who was interested enough to complete the story, and find out what had happened to Mason after the Whig framing machine left him crushed and bleeding public reputation lying in the gutter after that affair in 1841. The little boys who asked who Mason was were told that he was a drunkard, a crook, a disgrace to the State, the man who had caused the wave of bankruptcies and disasters which history says made up most of the period wherein he held office. That was all these boys' fathers knew; as boys they had heard it themselves from their fathers.

Woodbridge did Michigan a grievous injury by carrying his fear of Mason to such violent lengths. After his departure the Legislature's session degenerated into a brawl that sounds more like the anecdotes of old-time Tammany precinct clubs than the activities of a body of elected statesmen. They had been whipped into line by Woodbridge, but upon his departure they began snarling at each other. They were all heartily ashamed of the Mason episode, and blamed each other for it. This Legislature was the only one in Michigan history with a Whig majority, and the only one to behave in such a manner.

Mason was not in jail, but for all the good he did in Detroit he might as well have been. He became a walking ghost. He spoke to no one, went out but seldom, and then only for the

most necessary errands. Julia was in a decline over the affair; her family and his family kept begging him to wake up, accept the inevitable, and get out of Detroit. This combination of pressures could end in only one way. Mason, brokenhearted, physically ill and completely disgusted, sold his household furniture to raise money to transport his family to New York.

His last day in Detroit must have been a bitter one. The smell of the city was nauseating in his nostrils. The picturesque little capitol where he had held sway for so many years seemed to him a dream of something he had known in another incarnation. The streets were full of people who sneered at him, or he thought they did. His friends; His people! Look at me, he thought. This is Stevens Thomson Mason, the man who had faith in the good judgment and inherent uprightness of the people. This is what those people have done to me. Liberty! I gave it to them; I fought to keep their rights. I gave them the fullest freedom of any people in the United States. What did they do with it? They let me hang.

This was how Mason said good-bye to Detroit. Shuddering, he climbed aboard the Buffalo boat and sought sanctuary in his cabin. He knew he would never see Detroit again.

3

The gradual stiffening of governmental control in the United States has given us such an instinctive fear of the law that it seems difficult to believe that such a crass plot could have succeeded against Mason in 1841. We have learned that liberty implies a sense of honesty in the individual citizen. We define liberty loosely as the "four freedoms", and few among us remember what tyranny actually was like. Except in certain labor unions and statist nations, it is no longer expected that a man's political enemies will lash him as savagely as a wild animal merely because of a difference in political creeds.

In Mason's time, liberty was indeed often a synonym for unbridled license. Laws on the statute books were vague and feebly enforced. A man of some influence locally could get

away with almost anything. Crowds formed and roared threats over issues which would hardly rate a letter of protest to a newspaper of our times. In the village of Michigan Center, for example, in 1841, a group of buildings and \$30,000 worth of lumber and building supplies were burned by a mob which was protesting the village's attempt to become a division point on the Michigan Central Railroad. Things like that were commonplace, not only in Michigan but throughout the West. Frontier history is full of such instances, and we still thrill to the theme of violence in books and films based on the old West. Violence was as much a part of any pioneer's life as his midday meal of pork and beans.

This was the period when the Mormons were trying to build their dream city of Nauvoo, Ill., only to see their homes burned and their leaders murdered by Illinois mobs. This was the same year, 1841, when anti-Mormon violence at Nauvoo first captured the nation's attention. It was an era when no one outside the policymakers at Washington seemed to have the slightest conception of democracy as "the greatest good to the greatest number", but regarded their hard-won freedom as governmental weakness and as an excuse to take matters into their own hands.

It goes without saying that had Woodbridge lived in the present era he would have been a politician, but hardly a plotter of 1841 proportions. In Michigan several politicians have had to learn this lesson the hard way; the mammoth prison at Jackson usually has several politicians on its "guest list" simultaneously. They are guilty of criminal conspiracy, a crime which, had it been on the statute books in 1841, would have been Woodbridge's nemesis. Their crimes were not knee-high to the monumental frame-up which broke Mason's heart. Under the present rigidly enforced laws on this subject, Woodbridge would have gotten off lightly with ninety-nine years.

The laws would not have legislated a sense of fairness into a man like Woodbridge, but they would have made him afraid to risk heavy punishment by conspiring against Mason. The fact of Mason's defeat and disgrace during this conspiracy

illustrates the fundamental difference between the two men. Woodbridge was a schemer. Mason was a trusting soul.

He had a powerful imagination and an amazing breadth of vision, but he employed these aids to visualize constructive goals like the schools and the Internal Improvements project. In his career there is no record of personal bitterness toward anyone, except his indignation in 1832 when he fired a too-officious constable, Eliphalet Turner, for interfering with his attempts to fight the cholera plague. He made mistakes and was guilty of foolish acts, but never of vicious ones. His own strength of character brought about his downfall because, as a gentleman, he credited his enemies with being as high-minded as himself. He neglected to take proper precautions to protect himself from the network of plots which they presently cast around his astonished figure as soon as he became Governor.

In reading great numbers of Mason's letters, messages, documents and statements to newspapers, as any researcher must, there comes into relief a strong feeling that Mason was sincerely devoted to the thousands of little people who made up his beloved Michigan. He thought of the farmers and villagers first; their welfare claimed first consideration when a bill was presented to him for his signature. Mason was the common man's governor and administered his post as a public trust.

The picture is made vivid by a contrast with Woodbridge, who was in politics because it was his job—a livelihood—and had been for thirty years. He administered every post he held so as to squeeze the last dollar out of it, as is shown by his concurrent occupancy of the Territorial Secretaryship and the post of Collector of the Port of Detroit, besides practicing law at the same time. The two men were natural opponents in everything.

Mason fought for his beloved schools; Woodbridge fought Mason. The schools survived; not one act of Woodbridge's has survived except the sale of the Michigan Central Railroad to private purchasers, and perhaps that was inevitable. Mason's mind was aimed firmly ahead—on the future. Woodbridge's

mind was always on the present—what he could do *now*. There is no parallel in Woodbridge's writings to the sentiments of Stevens T. Mason as expressed in speeches he made on the need for helping the schools.

"If our country is ever to fall from her high position before the world, the cause will be found in the ignorance of the people; if she is to remain where she now stands, with her glory undimmed, educate every child in the land."

Another:

"As the friends of civil liberty, it becomes our duty to provide for the education of the rising generation. To the intelligence of those who preceded us we are indebted for our admirable system of government, and it is only upon the intelligence of those who come after us that we can hope for the preservation and perpetuation of that system."

A warning to the Legislature, in an annual message:

"Public opinion directs the course which our Government pursues, and as long as the people are enlightened, that direction will never be misgiven. It becomes our imperious duty, to secure to the State a generous diffusion of knowledge. This can in no wise be so certainly effected as by the perfect organization of a uniform and liberal system of public schools. Your attention is therefore called to the effectuation of a perfect school system, open to all classes, as the surest basis of public happiness and prosperity."

This is the man whose name the violent Whigs plastered with filth; this is the character which was attacked and smashed merely as a diversion to get Woodbridge out of the newspaper columns. Nothing the Whigs ever did for Michigan approximated the loss they caused when they drove Mason out of Detroit, embittered, humiliated and crushed in spirit. In fact, the party dissolved soon afterward without having accomplished anything of note, to be succeeded by the Republicans. The early Republicans were a reform party, disavowing nearly every point of the Whig platform. And so while the Whigs defeated Mason, the popular reaction which set in almost immediately after 1841 helped to kill the Whigs, at

least in Michigan. The party's chief contribution to the country after the election of William Henry Harrison was the scandalous fight they caused in Congress after his death. "Old Tip" died after a month in office, and Tyler, who succeeded him, quarrelled with the Whigs and vetoed their bills. The entire Whig cabinet resigned except for Daniel Webster, Secretary of State. In Congress a solemn vow was given to prevent any member from speaking to Tyler, or of him. The nation rapidly slid down into the political turmoil which made the elimination of the Whig Party a stern necessity.

Thus Mason was sacrificed to nothing. There was no gain, only untold loss. He did not go down fighting in defense of a principle. He was just knocked on the head and tossed aside. The impact upon Detroit was not long in making itself felt, and perhaps the Mason episode was the reason why Woodbridge's trained-animal act was the first, last and only Whig legislature in Michigan history.

The impact upon Mason is more difficult to explain. He was young, in good health, and had a family circle of loving parents, wife and children. He had within himself ample resources for warding off a blow like this, getting to his feet, and going on to greater triumphs. He tried. Perhaps he tried too hard. Instead of succeeding, he became increasingly irritable and moody. He could not forget what Woodbridge had done to him. It was not Woodbridge who loomed up as the chief sinner in Mason's mind, because he had learned long ago to expect anything from him. The cause of Mason's misery was that composite character, the common citizen of Michigan. Where was he when Mason was being refused a chance to speak in his defense? What self-sacrificing, immediate action in Mason's behalf had the people taken during the "Toledo War"? They had been sheep, led around by Woodbridge and afraid to speak up.

He was not the first man to be felled by an unscrupulous enemy, but he seemed to succumb to it to a greater degree than most. What had happened in Mason's mind could be explained

by a psychiatrist, perhaps, in terms of shock, disillusionment and apathy. He became so cynical that he became unfit for any big accomplishment, and slipped farther and farther down the social and professional scale. It could have been prevented.

The experience was a stunning psychological blow. Mason's belief in the fundamental goodness and honesty of the public was much stronger than ours of today, surrounded as we are by so many examples to the contrary. The shock of his abandonment to Woodbridge's wolves without so much as a mass meeting in the Campus Martius in his behalf was a terrible blow to him. He had the heritage of generations of Mason statesmen in his veins. He, too, had tried to be a statesman. He now discovered that, in order to survive in Michigan, he should have been a politician all the time.

And so Mason went away—to New York. He tried to forget that he had ever lived in Detroit. He was a vivid topic of conversation for a while and then, as people will, they forgot him. The Mason legend, which had begun when he had first started filling inkwells in the Territorial capitol in 1830, finished with his dramatic appeal in the pamphlet: "To The People of Michigan". It is human nature to remember a man mostly for what last brought him to our notice, and so Mason was remembered as a thief who had narrowly escaped prison. Only the lies about him survived, twisted from generation to generation into almost unrecognizable forms. Finally, toward the close of the century, school children no longer read of him. The name of Mason was missing from the list of Founding Fathers.

Yet the Mason name survived in various traces. There were Mason County, and the town of Mason in Ingham County. Many of the older cities have a Mason Street, well downtown now, bearing testimony to the size of the place when the name of the illustrious Boy Governor was applied to it. There is Mason Hall at the University, the Mason School in Detroit. His portrait in the Representatives' Hall at the State capitol leads all the rest, hanging in the corner from which the painted parade of Michigan's chief executives begins.

In the legislative term of 1899-1900 a young Representative named David E. Heinemann was fascinated by the portrait, the optimism in Mason's face, the proud set of his shoulders, the graceful hands. He studied the history of the painting and wrote a monograph on it, and as far as records show, that was almost the first mention of Stevens Thomson Mason in the Michigan Legislature since that day in 1841 when his plea to speak was denied.

CHAPTER XIV

FLOWERS FROM THE FIRING SQUAD

I

MASON looked at a clipping from the *Free Press* of October 7, 1841. "To Rent," it proclaimed. "The dwelling house on Jefferson Avenue now occupied by John T. Mason. Possession given on the 15th of October. S. T. MASON." The notice had been running in the paper since September 21st, and when he succeeded in renting he had just time to pack hurriedly and leave before his tenant came in. He remembered, as he gazed at the clipping, that he was only twenty when he had bought that house, and the deed was in his father's name. Twenty years old! Ten years ago.

He would not go on deck and watch Detroit's graceful skyline recede behind the trees of Grosse Ile. His mind closed on the chapter of his life that Detroit represented. Ahead lay only the problem of making a living, and that did not seem much to Mason, after what he had been through in public life. He thought about his family, and about Julia.

Julia was happy. As she dozed in their cabin she smiled to herself with the pleased look of one who has succeeded. She was glad that Detroit was behind her and that she would never have to see that place again. She was glad that the frightening people of Detroit stayed there—far behind, where she would never again see them or be afraid of them. Particularly, she was glad because her new baby, the third, would be born in New York like its brother and sister. She thought that it was her insistent pleas which had dictated Mason's removal. She had been kept in ignorance of the more sinister implications of the Woodbridge plot. While she knew that business at Mason & Pritchette had not been very good, she did not know any motive other than her entreaties for this happy state of things.

Mason wasted no energy trying to explain. He was exhausted and in need of rest. As he covered her, considerably, against the chill of Lake Erie, he was aware of the distortion of her body that signalled the approach of their new baby. He felt acutely sorry for Julia, knowing that earning a living in New York would not be as simple as she believed. He knew he was facing a hard time.

There was only one time during the trip when Mason was cross with her, and she put that down to his exhausted physical condition. She brought up the matter of domestic arrangements at her father's house, assuming as a matter of course that the Mason family would live there. Mason told her with great emphasis that they would go anywhere else, that his first occupation upon reaching New York would be that of house hunting.

The only money he had was the small sum realized from the sale of his household possessions. It would get them a place, but not a house, because they no longer had the furniture for it. Pritchette had promised to forward certain fees owing Mason from the partnership, and as of the date of his arrival, Mason felt able to survive until he could earn new money as an attorney.

Julia and the two children had only a day or so in the Phelps house before Mason yanked them away. He confessed in some embarrassment that he had been unable to find a proper place for them which he could afford. But he had found a boarding-house on Leonard Street, off Broadway, far downtown, and it would have to do until he could find better lodgings. "Not for always," he said, "only until I can afford something better."

Julia wept; old Phelps said it wasn't necessary. He said he had plenty of money and plenty of room. He could afford to play host to them indefinitely. Mason refused bluntly; it was the boardinghouse. That was the best he could afford, and that was where his family was going to live.

The location was close to the financial district, only a short walk from the great mercantile areas in lower Broadway. Somewhere thereabouts Mason determined to set up an office, in a district where law business originated. He determined to

plunge in, hang out his shingle at the best address he could get, cultivate people who had expensive connections and frequent trouble with the courts.

He had made these plans and installed his family in the boardinghouse before he learned that he couldn't even practice law in New York State. If he had known that there was a difference in qualifications between the two states the fact had entirely escaped him during his recent worries. The dreams of quick success vanished when he learned what delays faced him. His first interview at the office of the New York Bar Association blasted his plans sky-high.

"But I'm admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of Michigan! Isn't that enough?"

"Is that in New York State?" inquired the Secretary. "It's immaterial what courts you have been admitted to practice before, if they're not in this State. You have never applied for admission here, nor passed the examinations we require. I'll give you a list of the requirements. You'd better get some textbooks and start studying."

With a sinking heart, Mason studied the long list of requirements. It would take him all winter to prepare for the examination. In the meantime he was totally without earning power, and also without sufficient resources to finance a long struggle merely to gain admission to the Bar. It was another resounding blow, added to all the others. He no longer carried himself stiffly erect. The optimism and confidence so marked in his state portrait were gone now and were replaced by lines of worry on his high forehead and around the corners of his mouth. A man can stand attack from almost any angle except through his family. Mason winced when he thought of Julia and the babies cooped up in that boardinghouse all winter, living on less and less, going without, giving up everything Julia had known as a girl so that he could sit there, month after month, studying law. Poverty! At last he was face to face with actual privation, as John T. had been during the ugly winters in Mount Sterling. He knew what poverty had done to his father. Must he go through that?

He did go through it, but he drew from his enormous reservoir of inner strength to ward off the psychological effects which had reduced his parents to misery in similar circumstances. He tried to keep cheerful, and did his best to make Julia as happy as he could. He worked; he attacked those books with the same energy that he had shown in Detroit as Governor. It was while they were living in the crowded little boarding-house on Leonard Street that his third child, a boy, was born in March, 1842, and proudly named for Lucy's father—Thaddeus Phelps Mason.

In spite of the honor thus conferred, the baby's grandfather sat in his big house and moped. He did not like the world. The country was going to the dogs; scoundrels were in public office and sound money had vanished. There was no incentive any more, he said, for a young man like Mason to get out and make a fortune. Crooked politicians would probably take it away from him anyway. He was through with it all, Phelps declared. He had closed up his leather business and was calling all his loans. He was going to retire. He saw no future in America; nothing ahead but recurrent panics and ruin. Mason felt depressed every time he spoke to the old gentleman, and after the ceremonies attending the baby's christening he determined to go somewhere else, if possible, where he and the family could be happy.

In April, 1842, he moved the family to a sunny house on Staten Island. About this time he wrote to his father that he had made some progress. He had been admitted, he said. He had been practicing only a few weeks, but he was already getting a few clients. "I have formed an extensive acquaintance," he wrote, "and have about ten cases, a most respectable docket for a beginner. I have no fear of the ultimate results."

He was whistling in the dark. Hemans says the ten cases he had were the cat-and-dog drudgery of the law that other attorneys didn't want, mostly as the court-appointed defense attorney defending petty crooks who were caught red-handed and didn't have a dime. He had not been fighting this legal battle very long before he wrote his father again:

"I confess that I had formed but a limited idea of the difficulties in the undertaking of coming to New York. My absolute living expenses are \$1,500 a year, and my only capital consists of hope, energy and perseverance."

In July, 1841, things were no better:

"Humility and modesty are not appreciated in New York. . . . A man, to succeed, must keep up appearances and seek the society of those who can benefit him in his profession, otherwise he would starve to death."

He was becoming disillusioned and in doubt of his ability to achieve all these things. He probably missed the applause of the crowds, the stir caused by his appearance at a political meeting or a formal ball, or the humble attitude of Michigan villagers who were famous people at home merely because they had met him, touched him, or spoken to him. In New York he was something less than nobody, another lawyer in a city full of struggling lawyers, another tenant in a boarding-house. This Mason was beginning to walk stoop-shouldered. He was hollow-eyed, morose and becoming bitter.

In the summer sunshine on Staten Island the family's spirits revived somewhat, but Mason's precarious practice didn't improve. He rode the ferry back and forth every day, sat in his law office, and tried to think of ways to regain the social recognition in New York that was once his as Governor of Michigan. "Keep up appearances . . . seek the society of those who can benefit me. . . ."

The red and gold leaves were falling from the maples, and the autumn wind whipped the bay as Mason rode to his office on the ferry. Summer was over. Facing him was another winter in that boardinghouse, instead of the pleasant house he had promised Julia. Mason's heart was not in anything he was doing. He was thinner, and increasingly moody.

During the summer, Emily had come over to Staten Island to visit the family for a day or so, and of course her diary presently flowed with crisp comments on the sad change in his appearance, the queer apathy which made him absent-minded, the heartbreaking look of futility which had replaced the

firm, clear-eyed countenance of the Governor. Emily was so deeply concerned that she kept her worst fears out of her notes for fear that her brother might find them someday, and realize how he looked through the eyes of another. It was to their father, John T., that Emily wrote a series of letters about Tom Mason with the painful situation clearly and unhesitatingly depicted. John T. immediately left Louisiana and began a hurried trip to New York, hoping that he would arrive in time.

Mason was oblivious to the change in himself, or if he noticed it, he did not comment. During December, 1842, some of the Richmond folk he had met on Staten Island invited him to attend a meeting of the Lyceum Society and deliver a talk entitled "The History of the Northwest". They paid a fee; it was just before Christmas and Mason was temporarily happy again. He could tell them a few facts about the history of the Northwest from a decade of intimate daily contact with it; he himself had shaped that history as much as any living man. His lecture was a success. He returned to Julia wreathed in smiles, and Christmas was a happy day.

New Year's Eve promised to be even happier. At last he held in his hands his long-awaited opportunity. He received a cordial invitation from Washington Irving, who Mason feared had forgotten him, to attend the famed Irving New Year's Eve ball. He and Julia were as excited as children. A ball at Washington Irving's!

He wasn't feeling well, but that was nothing. The ball was a great social affair in the best old Knickerbocker tradition, with a guest list that read like the index to the *Social Register*. He must go! It was the place for a young lawyer to be seen. It was the environment in which to meet important people, seek new clients. It was the very affair he had in mind when he wrote: "I must seek the society of those who can benefit me. . . ."

He went. He had a wonderful time. But it was a long, cold journey downtown in a drafty hackney carriage from the resplendent Irving mansion to the little boardinghouse on

Leonard Street. He was coughing when Julia helped him inside, and she realized he was running a fever. The following day, New Year's Day, was a holiday and Julia couldn't find a doctor until evening. By that time she had located Emily and John T., and implored their help. Her husband was dangerously ill.

John T. hurried to the boardinghouse, and gazed upon the stricken figure of his son. Mason was only partly conscious, but tried to smile as he recognized his caller. The old man ran for a doctor—any doctor. There was a Doctor Boyd who lived in the neighborhood, and to him John T. breathlessly poured out the story. Dr. Boyd returned to the boardinghouse with him, examined the patient and opined that he was certainly sick, and had a high fever, but it would have to run its course. He expected that by morning the patient would be somewhat better.

It was a poor diagnosis. Mason was seized with violent stomach cramps that night, January 1st, and vomited and retched unceasingly. All day January 2nd he lay tossing in bed complaining of a violent headache. The fever was as high as ever. On the night of the 3rd, Dr. Boyd declared that he had an "inflammatory sore throat," bled him, gave him some medicine and told Julia not to worry.

Dr. Boyd evidently did not recognize pneumonia, and might not even have heard of the disease. On January 4th he was at Mason's bedside with a Dr. Grayson, whom he had called for consultation. They put their full-bearded heads together for a long, whispered conference, examined him again, and declared that whatever ailed him it probably was not serious. They left some pills and took their departure.

About ten minutes later, which places the time at about eleven o'clock on the night of January 4th, a personal friend of John T.'s called at the boardinghouse to see him. He was shown into Mason's sickroom, where John T. was standing at the bedside. His name was Dr. Mott. He was a well-known physician from uptown, with a big practice and a famous name. His visit had nothing to do with the sick man, but as

soon as he saw Mason he made a quick examination, took pulse and temperature and called John T. out of the room. Taking him aside, Dr. Mott told him quietly that Mason was dying, that he had pneumonia and was in such an advanced condition that there was no help for him.

At three o'clock on the morning of the 5th of January, Mason was in a semicoma. He was conscious for some minutes, then drifted into delirium. He roused himself long enough to recognize Julia, and then, said John T., he seemed to fall into a composing sleep. Silently, he died.

John T. collapsed in a chair and wept. Emily ran to give help to Julia, who was in hysterics. Dr. Mott stayed long enough to prescribe sedatives for her, and said that he would notify Thaddeus Phelps. The dawn came, but to the shaken people who had taken part in that all-night vigil, the sun had lost some of its brilliance. They were still sitting there by midmorning, without having spoken, when Dr. Boyd returned with a diagnosis. Mason, he said, had "suppressed scarlet fever".

Toward midafternoon of that day, January 5, 1843, John T. had finally quieted Julia and he sat down to write the tragic news to his daughter Kate Mason Rowland, at Detroit. He found a pen, and began:

"I attempted to write you last night but found myself unequal to the task, and am now little better prepared to announce to you a most heartrending event. Our light afflictions for the past year we bore not without repining, but they were temporary and susceptible of alleviation. Now we have to summon to our aid the strength we possess, and call to our relief the only power that is capable of it—the power of religion—the trust in God that all His ways are best. Your beloved brother is no more—I cannot yet realize the awful truth. But it is nevertheless so. He now lies a corpse in this house. His sickness was not considered dangerous until two hours before his death, and it was so sudden, so calm and so free from pain that to look upon him at this moment the serenity of his countenance cheats you into the belief that he still lives.

Yes! He does, but in another world, the destined abode of us all."

There follows a brief description of the doctors' mistaken treatment and the shock the old man received when Dr. Mott told him the terrible truth. He recounts calmly how Dr. Mott "told me he was dangerously ill and could not live more than two hours," but that nothing could be done.

"His predictions were, alas! too true, and at three o'clock he expired without a groan, in such entire absence of pain that he seemed to fall into quite a composing sleep. Little did we apprehend that it was the sleep of death—from which we can only awake at the Resurrection—such is the will of God, and we must submit, and in true faith believe that this decree is according to His wisdom and goodness and for the best—hard as it is for us to bear the infliction.

"Julia is in a state of distraction and I can hardly tell the character of my own mind. I shall write to you again in a day or two, but it is impossible for me to afford consolation other than your own minds will present; a submission to the will of God—to whom I commend you, and pray that He may give you strength to sustain you under the heartrending calamity which it has been His pleasure to award us.

"Your affectionate father,

JOHN T. MASON"

As the body of the Boy Governor was borne slowly out of the Phelps house a few days later, John T. Mason and Emily walked bareheaded, side by side, behind the hearse to the little old cemetery across the lower end of Manhattan. The body was encased in a beautiful mahogany casket, in which was sunk a wide silver plate bearing his name, and the date of his death. It was covered with flowers from the New York Bar Association, from Tammany, and from the Mason and Phelps families. The procession followed slowly behind the flower-banked hearse until it arrived at the appointed place, the now-forgotten Marble Cemetery, between the Bowery and Second Avenue,

Second and Third Streets. There the procession halted. Julia Phelps Mason, a wisp of heavily veiled black, stood between her father and John T., with Emily close by. There was a brief service, then the awful, final leave-taking. The casket, shorn of its silver handles and with the flowers now carefully banked around the scene, was observed to disappear, inches at a time, into a dark, damp, limitless hole in the side of a towering stone wall which contained the Phelps family crypt. A newly chiseled marble slab was swung over the opening and cemented in. On its clean white face it bore only two lines:

STEVENS T. MASON

Died January 5, 1843

2

Only a week later, on January 12th, the news reached Detroit.

The citizens of that lusty city knew that something was amiss when they saw their conservative *Free Press* in mourning, with heavy black rules between its page one columns. They hurried scanned the *Advertiser*, which had hated Mason more than cholera. Yes, there it was again. "Death of Stevens T. Mason." John N. Ingersoll's *Journal and Courier* carried a laudatory column on the front page, among the classified advertising, an almost unheard-of place for a news story in 1843.

All the Detroit papers forgot political feeling and paid warm tribute to Mason the man. Sheldon McKnight's *Free Press*, always Mason's champion, dramatically described him as "the most honored citizen and universally beloved friend of Michigan . . . the gifted orator . . . the talented statesman . . . the high-souled patriot . . . the warm-hearted, frank, generous, noble and magnanimous friend." Editorially the paper's issue of January 13th carried on in the same vein, with many a reference to Mason's sterling virtues and acknowledged abilities. McKnight in a signed column wrote an obituary which shows his deep personal affection for the handsome figure who had dominated Michigan for so long. "He was an

excellent son, and a devoted husband and father. His abilities were of a high order, his information general and extensive, his eloquence ardent and impressive. If he had political enemies they were fewer than ever fell to the lot of any other public man. If he had defects, they too were slight and unobserved amidst the good qualities which excited admiration."

Even the bitter *Detroit Advertiser* thought the time had come to close the books on an old feud. "We cannot forbear to mingle our tears in the general sorrow. His career here was indeed an uninterrupted political struggle, and yet few men have left behind them more personal friends from among all parties, and now when the hand of death has laid him low we cannot but count ourselves fortunate to have been permitted to have been of that number. *Vale, amice, vale!*"

That was the first and only time the *Advertiser* had declared any friendship for Stevens T. Mason, but the spirit behind it was generous. It was spoken of as a courteous gesture, and the general tone of the newspaper eulogy brought the Mason name back to Detroit lips immediately. The Legislature was in session. It still had some of the familiar whiskery old faces, but they were thinning out. Detroiters who had known Mason's agony under the lash of legislative persecution looked toward the old capitol building with curiosity.

"*Mister President!*"—"Mister Speaker!"

It was all right now. They were going to hear Mason's name again, in the Legislature that Woodbridge had forbidden to utter it. Woodbridge was reading his newspaper in Washington, with what thoughts we do not know. He no longer held control. A Democrat named Greenly, from Adrian, took the floor in the Senate. He had held a brief caucus with other Senators of both parties and said he was authorized to speak for them.

"Since our adjournment yesterday," he said, "the mournful intelligence has been received of the death of the Honorable Stevens T. Mason, the former and first Governor of our State. The first political relations of his life were with us. As soon as he had attained his majority he was by the almost unanimous

suffrages of our people elected to the Chief Magistracy of our State. In all his relations with us, both as a citizen and as a magistrate, he was courteous, generous and liberal, deeply imbued with all those qualities which were the governing principles of his life, and created strong attachments which existed between the deceased and the citizens of Michigan. After our relations were terminated by his voluntary withdrawal from public life, he removed to the City of New York to follow the profession of law and to follow a quiet domestic life. But his earthly happiness was destined to be of short duration. In the midst of his usefulness and in the pride of his manhood, by the interposition of an overruling Providence he has been called to 'that bourne from which no traveler returns', and while our tears of sympathy flow freely with those who are afflicted by this dispensation, let us invoke the Father of all Mercies to smile upon and console his bereaved family and relations.

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we deeply sympathize with the relations of the late STEVENS T. MASON in their sudden and afflictive bereavement, and in this manner publicly would tender our heartfelt tribute to the memory of the deceased, as an individual who was deeply imbued with all the sterling virtues of public, social and private life."

The Senate did not keep this mention of Mason from the public records; it had copies of this resolution distributed throughout the State. The House passed a very similar one, introduced by Representative Edwin H. Lathrop of Kalamazoo County. By arrangement, the leaders in both Houses got a committee appointed to prepare what they called a "funeral," and a day of public mourning for the late Governor Mason. The ceremonies were held on Sunday, January 15, 1843, at the little Episcopal Church on Woodward to which Mason had come reverently each Sunday for many years.

In silence, thousands of Detroiters and people from near-by towns gathered on the wooden sidewalks to watch a solemn funeral procession which had no body to bury. As a parade it was a success. It bore a noticeable military air in recognition

of Mason's participation in two minor wars—the Black Hawk War and the Patriot Uprising. The Brady Guards were up in front, with Major Ike Rowland in a black arm band marching at their head. Following them came the equally resplendent Scott Guards, with officers from the Army post at Fort Wayne in their gold-epauletted dress uniforms. Governor James Wright Gordon, looking very sad at Mason's untimely death, rode with all the heads of the State departments, Judges of the Supreme Court in their robes, officers of the Senate and House, the Mayor of Detroit and his Board of Aldermen, all the members of the Detroit Bar Association and peculiarly, the entire membership of the Detroit Typographical Society, to which Mason had not belonged.

It was the longest procession Detroit had ever seen, and one of the strangest. There was no music, no sound from the crowds, only the *clop-clop* of horses' hooves on the thick plank surface of the streets. It must have been an impressive sight. It must have made newcomers to Detroit wonder what manner of man could have inspired such a monster funeral, especially since its central attraction, the casket, wasn't there. If they had been told that he wasn't there because many of these same distinguished figures now riding in the procession in their shiny silk hats and lugubrious expressions had driven him out, heart-broken and in disgrace, it would have sounded like a fairy tale.

Mason himself would have been thrilled at the sight of it. Here was proof, in the crowds lining the sidewalks, that in spite of the abuse heaped upon him he still held the affection of great numbers of citizens. If he could have mingled with them, on the sidewalks, and could have heard them sigh at their memories of this spectacular figure, relate little anecdotes about how he had spoken to them, or how they had seen him on a platform once, his heart would have recovered and his spirit, too. He would have heard their praises of him, their repugnance at the mean way they all had turned their backs upon him when he most needed their help. Like them, as they saw the Whig legislators who had refused to hear him, he would have turned aside in disgust.

What had happened to him during his last days in Detroit was forgotten now. In their hearts, as they watched the slow-moving procession, and to no lesser degree in the hearts of thousands more in the villages throughout Mason's Michigan, Mason was there. They seemed to see him fleetingly once more, looming up over that procession, as Michigan would one day immortalize him—tall, erect, confident, chin up, his gold-headed cane under his arm as he stroked on his white silk gloves and patted his gleaming high hat to just the right rakish angle—the figure of fashion in a setting of sin.

THE END

APPENDIX

MASON RETURNS TO DETROIT

THE BODY OF Stevens Thomson Mason lay in the cold crypt wall space in the Marble Cemetery, New York, for sixty-two years. Then something happened which is a natural part of the Mason legend, another one of those impossible things which were always happening to the Boy Governor. He got out of that crypt and came back to Detroit.

He came in triumph and he came to stay. The lies about him were forgotten by that time, but the good he did was beginning to be understood in its true perspective. No one in Detroit cared much what his politics had been. They wanted Mason to come home.

The man who brought him home was Lawton T. Hemans, of whom so much has been written in the preceding pages. He was a middle-aged lawyer who lived in the town of Mason, and practiced law there. He had a very good practice; so lucrative that, in the declining years of his life, he could afford an expensive hobby. This hobby, for some reason, was the justification of Stevens Thomson Mason before posterity. He undertook to write a complete legal brief on Mason's life and career which would place the Boy Governor and the Whigs in their true relationship, without any Whigs being on the scene to forbid him the privilege. He was a legal researcher who determined to prepare his case in Mason's defense as if he might have to plead it before the Supreme Court. He spent twenty years doing it and, like his beloved hero, he died before success was reached. He spent twice as long, in fact, justifying Mason as Mason himself had spent in office. But it was an appalling task to locate, assemble and analyze old records which by that time had been gathering dust for sixty years. It was detail drudgery on a colossal scale, and sometimes there are questions asked about why Mr. Hemans did it.

Mrs. Hemans understood part of it, and in a preface to Hemans' great work she tried to explain. She said that when he was a boy running around the village of Mason he wanted to know why the village was so named, and was told that it had been a mistake; Mason was a politician who had once been Governor. He had died suddenly in early manhood after an evening's debauch, and his lifeless body found in a Detroit gutter; so the boy

was told. He grew curious about Mason. As a young man he visited the capitol at Lansing and there encountered the Mason State portrait.

"As he gazed upon that face so full of culture and refinement, the desire was born in his heart to try and refute that criticism and other calumnies heaped upon the Boy Governor. As he began collecting and reading, he became more and more convinced that many unjust remarks had been showered upon Governor Mason; that the beautiful, upright, conscientious character of the man had never been shown in its true light. Mr. Hemans' desire grew stronger as his knowledge became deeper in his subject, and I really know that he had the greatest love and admiration for Governor Mason.

"He fell in love with his subject. His life's best endeavors went into collecting and putting together and writing a story of the Boy Governor. I think Mr. Hemans gave his life for the State of Michigan."

That is no overstatement. It is literally true. During his last two years he was in constant pain, bedridden, but dictating between groans with the knowledge that death was upon him. He repeatedly asked his wife whether she thought he could finish before he died. She didn't know. But she says he would sigh and say: "It was worth it. It was worth the cost."

For many years Mrs. Hemans was his agent in the thankless task of locating old letters, quaint daguerreotypes and trinkets which Hemans had traced to some family. Then the gracious middle-aged lady would have to call upon these total strangers and ask please might she poke around in their attic in search of a letter Governor Mason had written to the family's grandfather sixty years before. He sent her to the Burton Library of historical collections in Detroit with instructions to copy every reference to Mason in the old newspaper files, and there were hundreds. She sifted trash out of rubbish heaps, and found old brooches that contained a picture of some character in the Mason legend. All this time, Hemans himself was away from his law office and exploring around Owingsville, Kentucky, looking for the ruins of John T.'s iron mine. Or he might have been interviewing the astonished residents of Virginia manors about the history of their houses, when they were built and who lived there. He spent weeks in the New Jersey State capitol, making transcripts of all the records of the Morris Canal and Banking Company, which had been incorporated in that State. Eventually he wore himself out, exhausted his savings paying for clerical work on copies of these old records, and took to his bed.

But he had over 200,000 words of carefully footnoted facts about Mason. He was a lawyer, not a writer, and he was drafting this report, not writing a book. He planned to give it to the State Historical Commission as a perma-

ment record. This was done. It appeared as a State document about 1905, and was reprinted in a second edition in 1930.

During his wanderings and inquisitorial pokings into this and that, Hemans discovered that Mason was buried in the crypt in New York. He determined to correct that, and the decision led him into a long detour down the cluttered alleys of genealogy; he had to locate Mason's descendants, if any, and get permission to move the body. His first contact was with the Boy Governor's daughter, Mrs. Dorothea Mason Wright, of Newark. Mrs. Wright, a plump matron in her sixties, told him that she was very glad to consent; she felt that Mason belonged to Detroit. She said her Aunt Emily thought so, too. At this, Hemans nearly swooned. It was true. Aunt Emily was the original Emily Mason, a wiry old lady of ninety but still full of energy and crisp decisions. Mrs. Wright brought Hemans and Emily Mason together.

Emily had been through a hard time in the Civil War, in which she was a one-woman USO, Red Cross and canteen manager combined. She had been a dear friend of Lee's and a valuable organizer throughout the chain of Confederate camps and prisons. After the war she went to Europe to live, but became fed up with it and returned prior to 1900. Her old family furniture was still adorning her New York home; her diaries were intact; and many of John T. Mason's library books exhibited in Hemans' excited hands the marks of that trip across the Cumberland in 1812. She told Hemans to take anything he liked. Her diaries were priceless. But like any monomaniac, Hemans was not satisfied. He wanted more. And thus it happened that Emily, at the age of ninety, sat down and began writing quantities of descriptions, character sketches of figures in the Mason legend, and quaint word pictures of what the Mason slaves had looked like at Serenity Hall, Lexington, when she was five years old. She turned out to have a memory like a bound file of *The New York Times*. Before the demands of Mr. Hemans were satisfied, Emily had a book-length manuscript on her hands. This, too, at Hemans' suggestion, was turned over to the Michigan State Historical Society under the title "Autobiography of an Octogenarian". Excerpts are still kept on the shelves in Lansing.

By 1900, Hemans had a mountain of material on Mason's life and public career. But he had not gained custody of the corpus delicti, because he had been too busy cracking the whip over his two female slaves, Emily and Mrs. Hemans. He had to interrupt the work to organize a campaign to get the body back. The Legislature agreed to pay for it if there was a public interest in the idea. The Historical Society sent out a flurry of newspaper features on the Hemans campaign. It aroused the demand.

When the Legislature appointed a committee to supervise the removal of Mason's body to Detroit, Hemans was named as one of its members. He did most of the work, made all the arrangements, and fixed it for Emily herself to be present in Detroit when the new funeral was held. News of Hemans' activities, and the fact of Emily's survival, intrigued Michigan. The popularity of Governor Stevens T. Mason made a sudden reappearance. He was a famous man in modern Michigan, lauded by all the school authorities, praised by the professional men, immortalized by the University. The Mason legend came to life in such force that the Legislature was non-plussed. That body had not expected to encounter a wave of enthusiasm for a politician who had been dead, at that time, nearly seventy years. But it was so apparent that the Legislature had to take official notice.

Almost without debate, it appropriated \$10,000 for the execution of a fitting monument. Correspondence between Governor Fred M. Warner and Mayor George P. Codd of Detroit was friendly and mutually cooperative. Certainly the City of Detroit would help. It would landscape Capitol Park and get it ready for a permanent reburial there. The City would build a speakers' stand and bleachers for those who wished to attend the ceremonies. Hemans would have been satisfied merely to have the body back in Michigan. He was not much of a glad-hander or public orator. The Governor and the Mayor, however, would not be denied. They insisted that both he and Emily appear on the platform, along with Mrs. Wright and all the other surviving Mason descendants. They called out the militia, engaged bands, flooded the newspapers with announcements of a State-wide public holiday, and aroused so much enthusiasm that it became contagious. Michigan could not have been more excited if Mason had turned up alive, waving his silk hat. They looked forward to the big day the way we of this generation crowd around police lines to see the President. For that one day, Mason was a hero again.

The ceremony was announced for June 4, 1905. Horseshoe-shaped bleachers had been erected around the site in tiny triangular Capitol Park. It would seat only 2,000 people, and the rest of the Detroit public had to stand. They backed up in a milling mob far down Griswold. They couldn't hear much because there were no microphones or public-address systems in that day, but they could see sprightly old Emily mount the platform, nod vigorously to the crowd, and sit down. Mrs. Dorothea Mason Wright sat next to her, flanked by her son, Captain William Wright, USA. Stevens T. Mason of Detroit, a grandnephew of the Governor and the only surviving bearer of the famous name, was introduced and seated.

Hemans, his stooped figure darting nervously back and forth supervising

details, was the chief worrier of the occasion. Governor Warner read a long, eulogistic speech; Mayor Codd and the Board of Aldermen, now called the Common Council, took a few bows, and Hemans began to recite some of the biographical facts about the Governor. But the crowd was restless; they wanted to hear Emily. Several times Emily shook her white head and indicated that she didn't want to become the center of any attention, but the crowd was insistent. Finally she arose.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am so old I am sure you will hardly expect me to say anything of great length. With all my heart I thank you all, in the name of my family, my niece and myself, for your kind words and the kind things you have said about my brother. I shall never forget the honor and pleasure I have had in this visit, and I hope I shall yet live to come back again. I will talk no longer, because I want to shake hands with my old friends and neighbors here."

In 1905, Emily was able to greet Judge Edward Cahill, the Rev. D. M. Cooper and a number of others who remembered her when she lived at 303 East Jefferson Avenue with the aura of being the Governor's hostess. People who had shaken hands with the Boy Governor now tottered forward and took Emily's firm hand in theirs. While this was going on, the crowd had swelled until it was jam-packed from building to building across Griswold and across the park itself. Traffic was tied up all through the downtown section awaiting the parade, and all Detroit was crowding on the sidewalks to see Mason's coffin, which their ancestors were denied during the similar parade on the same streets, starting from the same point, in 1843.

The band led the way through the canyons between towering buildings to the Light Guard Armory, where the Detroit Police drill team was standing guard around the flower-covered coffin which Hemans had rescued from the vault. It was tenderly borne outside and placed on a gun mount. It was late in the afternoon. The sun slanted down across the Farwell Building, interposing a shadow like a benediction on the fresh earth in Capitol Park. The parade moved to the park; the old mahogany casket was slowly lowered into its final resting place and a bugler sounded "taps". The grave was directly below the spot where Governor Mason's office had been when the little capitol building stood there; the office wherein he created the great State, defended it and tried to build it—also the office where Woodbridge had slammed the door upon him when he sought to defend himself. The building had been a memory for many years, serving out its time as a school after Lansing became the State Capital in 1847.

Workmen began grading the site, seeding a lawn and preparing for the erection of the bronze statue, by Albert Weinert of New York. Detroit's

Russell Alger, then Secretary of War, had located the bronze for it from old cannon salvaged from historic old frontier forts of Mason's time. Presently the statue arrived, and was unveiled. Flanking the monument, the sculptor designed two curved marble endpieces serving both as benches and as decorative spacers around the base of the monument itself.

Visitors to Detroit seldom include Capitol Park among the modern attractions of the great motor metropolis. Mason is there; his body lies beneath the statue and his monument towers above. He stands there, erect and dashing as he was in life, but the huge skyscrapers of midtown Detroit dwarf the little triangular space and let in little light. The bronze figure seems tiny now, and hard to find even if one looks for it. Bushes have grown up, untrimmed, almost to the statue's shoulder. On either side of the bushes are enormous comfort-station signs, which get most of the attention. Impatient cars lined the curbs, bumper to bumper. Mounted policemen on imperious steeds glare at taxi drivers, who glare back. There stands Mason, forever glancing straight down Griswold with an expression of amused tolerance, but few of the thousands who pass there daily have ever noticed his monument. It seems like a sentinel, watching to make sure that these rushing people go down the right steps into the right places. It is time-blackened and forgotten by the lines of busy stenographers forever dashing across the park's diagonal sidewalks. Whirls of dust and bits of paper and gum wrappers blow unnoticed around Mason's calm, boyish face.

There stands Mason, and all around him flows the hurried, irritable endless wave of sound that is Detroit.

GENEALOGICAL NOTES

FROM JOHN T. MASON's family Bible, now in the Rare Book Room in the University of Michigan Library, the following is transcribed:

JOHN THOMSON MASON Born in 1787 at Raspberry Plain, near Leesburg, Virginia. Died at Galveston, Texas, April 17th, 1850, of malaria. Age 63.

ELIZABETH MOIR MASON Born 1789 at Williamsburg, Virginia. Died in New York, N. Y., on November 24, 1839. Age 50.

Children of John and Elizabeth Mason:

1. MARY ELIZABETH Born Dec. 19, 1809, at Raspberry Plain. Died February 8, 1822, at Lexington, Ky. Age 12.
2. STEVENS THOMSON Born Oct. 27, 1811, at Leesburg, Virginia. Died January 3rd, 1843. Age 31.
3. ARMISTEAD T. (I) Born Lexington, Ky., July 22, 1813. Lived 18 days.
4. ARMISTEAD T. (II) Born Lexington, Ky., Nov. 13, 1814. Lived 3 months.
5. EMILY VIRGINIA Born Lexington, Ky., October, 1815. [Miss Mason was over 93 when she died on a date which is not given in the family records.]
6. CATHERINE ARMISTEAD Born Owingsville, Ky., Feb. 23, 1818. Died in Detroit as Kate Mason Rowland.
7. LAURA ANN THOMPSON Born Oct. 5th, 1821. Married Col. Chilton of New York. [Date of death not recorded.]
8. THEODOSIA Born at Indian Fields, Bath Co., Ky., Dec. 6, 1822. Died at Detroit Jan. 7th, 1834, aged 11 years 1 month.
9. CORNELIA MADISON Born June 25th, 1825, at Lexington, Ky. Died in Detroit August 2nd, 1831. Aged 6.
10. A SON (Stillborn) March 20, 1827, at Owingsville, Ky.
11. MARY ELIZABETH (II) Born January 18, 1828, at Owingsville, Ky. Died in Detroit Oct. 29, 1833. Age 5.
12. LOUISA WESTWOOD Born at Mt. Sterling, Ky., Sept. 24th, 1829. Died Oct. 11th, 1829, aged 18 days.
13. A SON (Stillborn) Detroit, April 5th, 1833.

Children of Stevens T. and Julia Phelps Mason:

STEVENS T. MASON and JULIA PHELPS were married in New York, November 1, 1838. Julia was born in New York November 21, 1818. Daughter of Thaddeus Phelps.

1. STEVENS THOMSON, IV Born in New York, August 1, 1839.
2. DOROTHEA ELIZA Born in New York, October, 1840.
3. THADDEUS PHELPS Born in New York, March 11, 1842.

The death dates of Julia and the children are not recorded in the family Bible. The baby Stevens T. lived only a few years and died before reaching school age. Dorothea Mason Wright lived to an advanced age in Newark, N. J. Thaddeus Phelps Mason's death date is not known.

Antecedents of Stevens T. Mason

Source: *Life of George Mason*, by Kate Mason Rowland, Vol. I

Mason Lineage and Arms, by Jane Griffith Keys

Life and Times of Stevens T. Mason, by Lawton T. Hemans

The first Mason in the New World was a George Mason, of Staffordshire, an officer in the army of Bonnie Prince Charlie, which was badly defeated by Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester, Sept. 3, 1651. In the general exodus of Loyalists from England, Colonel George Mason came to Jamestown, Va., where he built a home in 1652.

In 1700 *George Mason, II*, son of the English officer, was commander of the Jamestown militia, a lieutenant colonel at age 20. He was a general in 1715.

In 1721 *George Mason, III*, a youth of 22, was elected Justice of the Peace. In this year he married *Ann Thomson*, daughter of *Stevens Thomson*, the Attorney General of Virginia. He built a huge manor house called "Gunston Hall," adjoining Mount Vernon, and was a friend of Lawrence Washington.

In 1774 *George Mason, IV*, boyhood friend of George Washington, began writing the "Virginia Papers" and urging Independence. He was the wealthiest man in Virginia, owner of 1,600 slaves and 30,000 acres of cultivated lands. He drafted Virginia's first State Constitution, served in the Continental Congress and in the Constitutional Convention. After refusing to sign the U.S. Constitution he drafted the first ten amendments, the famous "Bill of Rights".

George Mason, IV, had a younger brother, *Thomson Mason*. He built a small manor house at Raspberry Plain, Loudon County, Va., after returning from extended study and practice of law in London. He was the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia. He was born in 1730, at "Doeg's Neck Manor" in Stafford, now Fairfax County, Va., and died at Raspberry Plain in 1785. He was married twice; his only son by his first marriage was

the first *Stevens Thomson Mason*, born in Stafford, Va., in 1760, who died at Philadelphia, Pa., in 1803.

Stevens Thomson Mason left two sons, (1) *Armistead Thomson Mason*, born at Raspberry Plain in 1787, and killed in a duel at Bladensburg, Md., Feb. 5, 1819. Armistead T. Mason was a colonel in the War of 1812, afterward a general in the Virginia militia and U.S. Senator, and inherited Raspberry Plain from his father. Armistead T. Mason's brother (2) *John T. Mason*, father of Governor Mason, by a curious coincidence was born the same year, 1787, both sons being born to their father when he was twenty-seven years of age and already the father of two girls: *Catherine*, who married William T. Barry of Kentucky, and *Mary*, who married Benjamin Howard of the same state. In his will, the noted wit and raconteur left a warning to his two sons: ". . . neither of the said sons shall live on the south side of the James River nor below Williamsburg until they shall reach the age of twenty-one years, lest they should imbibe more exalted notions of their own importance than I wish any child of mine should possess."

Wife of the first Stevens T. Mason, *Mary Armistead Mason*, was the daughter of *Robert Armistead*, master of the great manor known as Serenity Hall, in Louisa County, Va. She outlived the Senator by many years, living quietly at Raspberry Plain until 1824, when her grandson, the future Governor Mason, was thirteen years old.

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THE USE OF FOOTNOTES throughout this volume has been avoided by providing instead a complete bibliographical index of the source material. Reference to this section will open to the reader many fascinating subjects for further reading, and almost any of them will provide him with detailed answers to scores of questions which may arise in his mind. It has been my intention to include the specific source of quotations, newspaper statements and other items which would ordinarily require footnotes, concurrently with the mention of the fact in the text. Others not fully explained therein will be found in this bibliography as subjects of entire volumes, lectures, papers and reports.

The bibliography contains more than a hundred references for such extended research on the part of the reader. The initials M.P.H.C., together with Roman and Arabic numerals, which occur so frequently, invite the reader to continue his quest in the volumes of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, on the pages and in the volumes cited. The complete thirty-volume set is found in all city and school libraries throughout Michigan, as well as in the Michigan State Historical Commission Library at Lansing. The bibliography is thus a sort of cross reference to the compiled footnotes of more than 150 years of carefully accumulated Michigan history. Other volumes cited are to be found in the State Library at Lansing, the Burton Library at Detroit, the Clements and University Libraries at Ann Arbor and in most other city libraries throughout the State.

For enabling me to gain complete access to this vast storehouse of information, and for his continued help, advice and encouragement throughout the long period of this volume's preparation, I am deeply grateful to George N. Fuller, Secretary of the Michigan Historical Commission.

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